

Tadpole shrimp

(*Triops cancriformis*)



Kirsty Staunton

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Description: Two large seeing eyes and a third light sensitive organ give this "horseshoe crab-shaped" creature its Triops name. Underneath there are multiple legs which it uses to scurry around the bottom of the pond.

Food: Small aquatic animals, algae, plant debris and even its own kind!

Habitat: The bottom of grazed, rainwater fed temporary ponds

Size: Up to 10 cm long

No. of eyes: 3



The tadpole shrimp is one of the oldest surviving species on earth, with similar fossils dating back to 200 million years ago. It manages to survive by living in temporary ponds where there are very few predators or competitors. Their lifecycle from hatching to laying eggs all happens while there is water in the pond, in as little as 2 weeks! The eggs remain in the top layer of soil when the pond is dry and can survive decades while waiting for the pond to refill with rainwater. Tadpole shrimp are **one of the rarest species in the UK**, only found in 2 locations (New Forest, Hampshire and Caerlaverock, Firth).



Neil Phillips