

European common frog *Rana temporaria* carcass scavenged by the planarian *Schmidtea polychroa*

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Parasitic flatworms are well known to cause serious harm to amphibians (Imai et al., 2009) but there have been few observations of interactions between amphibians and free-living flatworms (planarians), which could act as either scavengers or predators (Vila-Farre & Rink, 2018).

On 16 March 2014 in central Cambridgeshire (England, 52.215028, 0.142833) the carcass of a common frog *Rana temporaria* was discovered on the vegetated edge of a pond being scavenged by approximately 20 planarians (Fig. 1 A&B). The planarian species in question is believed to be *Schmidtea polychroa* (Tricladida: Dugesiidae). This was distinguished from the closely related species *Schmidtea lugubris* based on shape and colour (Reynoldson & Bellamy, 1970). Moreover, *S. polychroa* has been previously recorded in central Cambridgeshire, whereas there are no current records of *S. lugubris* in that area (NBN Atlas, 2024a; 2024b). Species of the planarian genus *Schmidtea* can be found in freshwater, growing to sizes of approximately 10 mm; they are grey, black or brown in colour with a diet that includes molluscs, algae and detritus (Reynoldson & Davies, 1970; Reynoldson & Young, 2000; Macan & Worthington, 1990).

It is rare for planarians to feed by scavenging (Reynoldson & Young, 1963) and this is the first recorded instance of a *Schmidtea* sp. scavenging on an amphibian although *Schmidtea nova* has been observed predated the eggs of *R. temporaria* in the laboratory (Segev et al., 2015).

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Figure 1. Free-living flatworms scavenging - **A.** *Schmidtea polychroa* scavenging on the carcass of a European common frog *Rana temporaria*, **B.** Close up photo of *Schmidtea polychroa*

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