

Introduction "Awesome in its conception...Brilliant in its depiciton...Dynamic in its execution... The world you are about to enter bears no resemblance to any arena you have ever encountered before. Weapons are of no avail in this small habitat.

The only source of protection at your disposal are quick wits and fast reflexes. The only reward is to survive against monsters of unbelievable ferocity and cunning, and to avoid hazards more perilous and deadly than any you might find on a trip through the outer universe. This is the real world, populated by the creatures of our own inner universe, where Nature is red in tooth and claw. Brace yourself now, and come with Starcade into the still water and deceptive calm of a Savage Pond."

You are now in the watery environment of the pond. At the top of the screen is a line allocated to SCORE, FROGS and HIGH SCORE.

Score and high-score are self-explanatory. The aim of the game is to build up a strong and healthy colony of frogs. (How else can we continue to play frog games? After all, they have to breed somewhere!) More about frogs later, but pay particular attention to a small log on the island in the top centre of the screen.

The rest of the scene depicts a pond. The water is full of fat and delicious amoeba (dare we say strawberry-flavoured?) pulsating merrily away as they wait their turn to be digested.

Rather more sinsiter are the hydra, weaving their deadly tentacles as they lie in wait for the unwary. One sting from their harpoon cells means a deep purple, and permanent dream for the unfortunate victims.

Occasionally a juicy worm falls into the water. There are a useful supplement to the tadpole's diet, and add substantially to the score. For a very limited time, the extra strength absorbed will give immunity to the stings of the hydra, and allow you to go into places where you would be very smartly dealt with. (But don't push your luck!) Every five worms that you eat prepares the way for another tremulous step along the path of evolution. For convienience, the number of worms currently eaten is shown in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. Every time the total reaches five, a beetle larva appears. If you can capture and eat him before worm-count is cleared, then you are one step nearer to reaching your goal. If he is not eaten, he will remain there and increase your opportunities for promotion at higher levels.

There are nine steps to be taken before you begin the serious occupation of frog breeding, but rather than interfere with the action, the program is only interrupted three times. Three phases are used to allow adjustments to screen data, but will also give the player an indication of his achievements to date.

At the bottom of the pond are three eggs of frogspawn. Even as you look, one egg has begun to develop. When the egg has fully opened, our tiny protagonist is ready to face the perils of his brave new world. He will not venture forth until he is sure that there is some sentinent being ready to control and protect him, so take a deep breath and push that joystick firmly forward. Once he is out and about, this small and very vulnerable creature is in your hands, and will go where you command. The speed at which he swims is controlled by the fire button.