

## Frogs

A frog is an amphibian. All amphibians have certain things in common. Like other amphibians, frogs lay their eggs in water. They spend the first part of their lives in the water. Then, they metamorphose, or change form. After that, they can live on land. Frogs are cold-blooded like other amphibians. Their body temperature matches the temperature around them. That is why some frogs like to sit on sunny rocks to keep warm.

Frogs have an interesting life cycle. Mother frogs lay their eggs in water. The water can be a lake. It can be a quiet pool in a stream. It can even be a puddle. A special jelly protects her eggs. When the eggs hatch, a tadpole is born. Tadpoles are sometimes called pollywogs. The tadpole looks like a little fish. It has a tail, and it breathes through gills. Tadpoles cannot leave the water. They cannot breathe air, and they do not have legs.

The tadpole eats and grows. It grows and grows. Bullfrog tadpoles can live in ponds for up to three years before they change into frogs. Spadefoot toad tadpoles can change in just 12 days. Eventually, all tadpoles grow legs. They also develop lungs. Then, one day, new little frogs or toads hop out of the water.

Different kinds of frogs live in different places. Spring peepers are tree frogs. They live in eastern forests. Leopard frogs live near streams or ponds. They are very shy. When enemies come near, these spotted frogs dive into the water. Leopard frogs are

common in the United States and Canada. Spadefoot toads are also common in the United States. They live in places that are hot and dry in the summer. They dig burrows. These underground homes keep their skin from drying out.

Frogs come in many different sizes. Goliath frogs are the largest in the world. They can be up to one foot long. The world's smallest frogs live in Cuban rain forests. They are less than one half-inch long. Bullfrogs are the largest frogs in the United States and Canada. They can be up to eight inches long. The chorus frogs that sing in eastern meadows are less than one inch long.

People need frogs. These little creatures eat lots of insects. Insects can carry diseases and harm crops. Frogs can also help keep us safe. They breathe through their skin. This makes them very sensitive to polluted water. When rivers or lakes contain poisons, frogs get sick. When frogs are dying, scientists pay attention. It could mean that the water is unsafe for people, too.

