

FROGS

220 million years ago, frogs were hiding, trying to avoid being stepped on by a dinosaur. Today they are still hiding trying to avoid today's predators and dangers.

If you want to observe these amazing animals, you need to listen and follow their vocalizations (croaks). Before we start stalking the wild frog, let's learn a little about them.

Frogs belong to the class of vertebrates called the Amphibians. Amphibians possess slimy skin, can breathe through their skin, have no claws, lay jelly-like eggs in the water, have some form of metamorphosis (has a tad pole) and most spend part of their life in the water. Amphibian means "double-life". There are 3 big groups or orders of Amphibians; the frogs, the salamanders and the tropical legless caecilians.

There are 31 species of frogs in Georgia. 22 species are found in our area. Toads are grouped with the frogs. Toads have warty skin, poison sacks in their skin and have short back legs but are still really a frog. We have no dangerous frogs in Georgia, but please refrain from licking them anyway. You can kiss one, but no prince will appear.

Now is a prime time to find frogs. Frogs like to be near water and the spring is breeding season. Females seldom make noise, but males have several calls. They call to establish their territory and find a mate. Calling also announces you to predators, so frogs need to be careful. Raccoons, snakes, foxes, birds and fish will feed on frogs. Frogs eat insects, fish, other frogs, snails, earthworms and spiders.

Frogs require standing water to lay their eggs. Their tadpoles feed on vegetation and have gills. Some tadpoles take a year to turn into a frog, others may be a tadpole for several years. Metamorphosis not only involves growing legs and lungs, but also a complete change in the mouth and digestive system.

Frogs maintain an important place in the ecosystem. They are often called "the canary in the coalmine" for aquatic environments. Coal miners used to carry a caged canary down into the mines. If the bird died, the miners left the mine. The bird was very sensitive to bad air and died before the miners knew there was a problem. When the frogs disappear or are seen with deformed limbs, etc., then there is a problem with the water. Frogs need clean water, as do people.