



Fabulous Fr^ogs

1 Frogs live all around the world, on nearly every continent. There are over 4,500 species of frogs on our planet, with more being discovered every year. Toads are also part of the frog family.

Frogs are *amphibians*, which means they live on both water and land. All frogs breathe through their lungs and their skin. This is why

their skin must stay moist.

2 Frogs live in different habitats, and many have evolved so they can survive. Changes in habitat, due to pollution and the cutting down of forests, are endangering many frogs. Frogs are called an *indicator species*, because they are the first to be affected by environmental problems.

3 The smallest frogs in the world live in Brazil and Cuba in South America. They are only 10 millimetres long, smaller than your finger. They eat tiny insects. Giant frogs can eat mice, rats and other frogs. The largest frog is the goliath frog in West Africa, which is 30 centimetres long and weighs 3.3 kilograms. It can leap three metres in a single bound, although this will tire it out after only a few jumps. For the average frog, its strong back legs allow it to jump up to six times its body length.

4 Many species of tree frogs have special hip joints that allow them to walk as well as hop. This is because it can be quite dangerous moving along thin tree branches. Tree frogs have little pads on their toes that can grip onto almost any surface. They use these to climb and hold onto branches and leaves. Some frogs that live high up in trees have special webbing between their toes so they can glide between branches.

5 Tree frogs lay their eggs in foam stuck underneath large leaves above ponds and streams. When the tadpoles hatch they drop straight down into the water. They will only climb out of the water once they have grown into fully formed frogs.

6 Frogs can come in all sorts of different colours. Found in the rainforests of South America, poison dart frogs have very bright skin colours — red, blue and yellow, or multi-coloured. This tells other animals they are poisonous.

In some parts of South America, indigenous people dip their blow darts into the frogs'

poison before hunting. One poison-tipped dart can kill a large bird or monkey. The poison from one frog can kill 20,000 mice. The most poisonous is the golden poison frog — one of these has enough poison to kill ten adults. These frogs are endangered because people capture them and take them overseas as pets.

7 Other frogs also have special colours to protect them. The Chilean four-eyed frog has a bright pair of spots on its rump that look like the eyes of a much larger frog. Usually they are hidden behind its legs, but if a predator comes near, the frog will lift its back and shows the 'eyes' to scare the predator away.

The yellow-bellied toad has a grey-brown, warty back, but its stomach is covered in bright yellow patches. These are a warning that it is poisonous. If a predator comes near, it will roll over to reveal its patches.

8 African reed frogs change their skin colour, turning it white to reflect heat and stay cool. These frogs live in the reeds by ponds and rivers in very hot countries. On hot days they can tuck their legs in tight and hide from the sun. Reed frogs also have calls that are so loud they can be heard several kilometres away.

9 Some frogs have other special abilities that allow them to live in strange or dangerous places. The water-holding frog lives in Australia. It spends most of its life buried in the ground. It can store water in its hole and only comes out to breed when it rains. It uses mucus to line its hole. The mucus hardens and becomes like a skin. When the frog wants

to come out, it has to tear the skin open.

There is also a mole frog in Australia that looks and digs like a mole. It lives in sandy places and can sometimes be found in termite mounds.

- 10 While most frogs lay eggs that grow into tadpoles, the male midwife toad carries his partner's eggs on his back for seven weeks. When they are ready to hatch, he backs into the water to let them wriggle out and swim away.

Barking frogs, which live on rocky cliffs in Texas, are also good fathers. This toad-like frog has a call like the yapping of a small dog. After the female lays her eggs in a rock

crevice, the male fertilizes and then guards them for four or five weeks. He waits by the eggs, moistening them with his urine when they become too dry, until finally the tadpoles emerge.

- 11 Some people keep frogs as pets. They make a home for their frogs in a *vivarium* with running water and plants. They buy crickets and maggots from the pet shop to feed the frogs. Other people make frog ponds in their back garden.

These are all useful, but it is more important to save frogs' natural habitats. Without such conservational efforts these beautiful and fascinating animals may disappear forever.

Questions

- 1 Toads are
a very poisonous.
b part of the frog family.
c not amphibious.
- 2 The smallest frogs in the world can be found in
a South America.
b Australia.
c Africa.
- 3 What are the bright colours of some frogs used for?
a to hide from predators
b to attract mates
c to show they are poisonous
- 4 Mole frogs
a live in sandy places.
b are blind.
c are poisonous.
- 5 Which male frog carries eggs on its back?
a golden poison frog
b midwife toad
c barking frog
- 6 Which of the abilities listed below is an example of how environmental changes affect frogs?
a The ability of all frogs to live on land and water.
b The ability of tree frogs to grip onto smooth surfaces.
c The ability of African reed frogs to change colour in the heat.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 Developed gradually (2)
8 To move smoothly through the air (4)
9 In danger of dying out (6)
10 Something that is hunting you (7)
11 Slimy secretions from the body (9)

Alphabetical Order

The following words appear in the text. When placed in alphabetical order, which one would be **first**?

- 12 lungs, land, legs, lift
13 frog, four, family, fathers
14 poison, patches, predator, pet
15 mole, male, midwife, mucous

Back To The Text...

- 16 It would be fair to say the writer is an environmentalist.
a true
b false
- 17 In which part of the library would you find this text?
a fiction b non-fiction

- 18 What would be a good sub-heading for section 10?

- a Texas Tadpoles
b Froggy Fathers

Cloze

Newts – Body Builders!

Choose from the following words to complete this cloze passage.

hands ability water
type highly

Newts, like frogs, are amphibians. They live on land and in 19 and begin their lives as tadpoles. Newts are a 20 of salamander. They have an amazing 21 to regrow limbs and even organs. They can replace anything from a leg to a heart! Many are 22 poisonous. If you handle a newt you should always wash your 23 thoroughly afterwards.

Challenge Option

Research: Many frogs have adapted to harsh conditions. Find a lizard that has done this too.

