

Mystery of the Disappearing **FROGS**

Frogs survived the catastrophic extinction of the dinosaurs. But strangely, the world's frogs and toads have suddenly begun to disappear. Some species that were common 25 years ago are now rare or extinct. And individual frogs are showing up with deformities such as too many legs. Scientists are not sure exactly what is going on.



But scientists do agree that because frogs drink and breathe through their thin skin, they are especially vulnerable to pesticides and pollution. A deformed frog often indicates that all is not well with the environment. And frogs live just about everywhere on Earth.

Frogs are amphibians, which means “double life.” They generally hatch in water as tadpoles and end up living on land as fully formed frogs. Frogs’ skin must stay moist, so they’re usually found in wet places.

Because frogs are so sensitive to environmental changes, they act as an early-warning system. Their dwindling numbers may be a sign that our planet is not as clean and healthy as it once was. By studying how frogs are affected by the environment around them, scientists may be able to predict-and sound an alarm-that a neighborhood needs to cut back on lawn fertilizers or that a chemical-dumping factory should clean up its act. The hidden message in frogs’ familiar peeps and croaks? “I’m jumpy for a reason!”

**SOME FROGS
GLOW
WHEN THEY EAT
FIREFLIES**

CALLING ALL FROGS

Frogs bark, croak, cluck, click, grunt, snore, squawk, chirp, whistle, trill, and yap. Some are named for they make. A chorus of barking tree frogs sounds like a pack of hounds on a hunt. The carpenter frog sounds like two carpenters hammering nails, and the pig frog grunts like – you guessed it – Porky’s cousin! Here a male Australian red-eyed tree frog (top of page) inflates his throat pouch, which helps make his female-attracting calls louder.