

Frog and Toad Metamorphosis



Frogs and toads belong to a group of animals called amphibians. The word amphibian comes from a Greek word that means "having two lives." Frogs and toads have immature, or larval, stages that look nothing like the adults. The change from larva to adult is called metamorphosis.

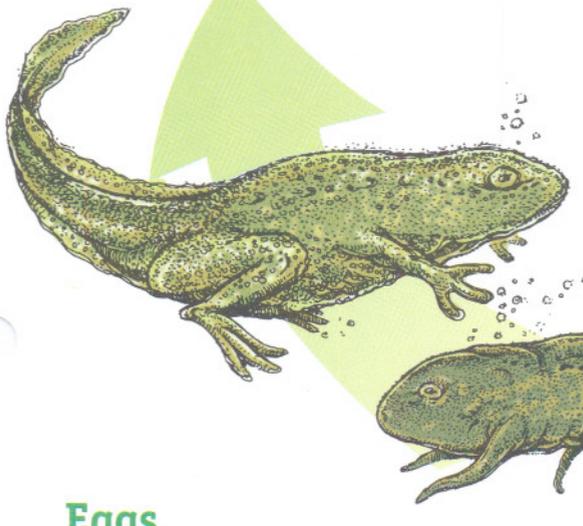
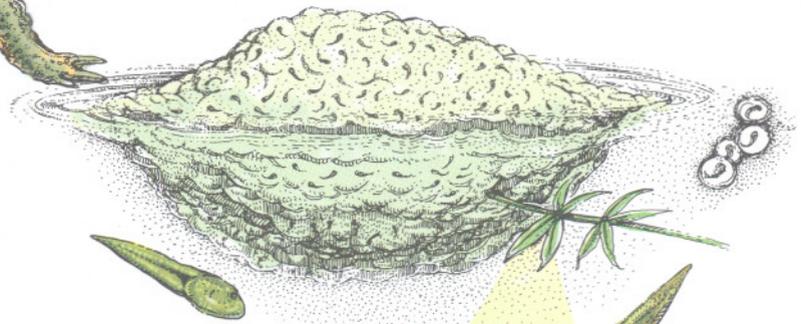


illustration-Ted Waikē

Eggs

Most frogs and toads begin life as eggs floating in the water. A female may release up to 30,000 eggs at once. Each species of toad and frog lays eggs at different times. Some lay eggs as early as March. Another lays eggs in the late summer and early fall. Frog and toad eggs are soft. A jelly-like material surrounds each egg. Most species of toads lay their eggs in strings. Frogs lay them in clusters, or large globs. Bullfrog eggs float freely. The eggs of some species attach to plants.

Hatching

The eggs of some species hatch three days after release. Others take as long as two weeks to hatch.

Tadpoles

When they just hatch, tadpoles look like a head with a tail. That's how they got the name pollywog. Older tadpoles look like fat little fish. Tadpoles have only a tail fin. Tadpoles also have gills and a lateral line, like a fish. They eat only algae and other small plants.

Metamorphosis

This process can take anywhere from two months to three years, depending on the species. During the metamorphosis (changing into a frog or toad), the following changes occur:

1. Lungs start to develop.
2. Legs begin to appear—rear ones first.
The front legs appear about two weeks later.
3. They absorb the tail into the body.
4. The mouth widens.
5. They start to eat meat, like bugs and small fish.

Toadlets

Young toads are called toadlets. Toadlets leave their water homes at this stage. They are now about the size of a big marble. In large groups, they move from the water into the woods, where they will live.

Froglets

Young frogs are called *froglets*. Aquatic species like bullfrogs just stay put after they change. Tree frogs and spring peepers migrate from the water to the woods.