

# Frogs and Toads



**American Toad**  
(*Bufo Americanus*)



**Bullfrog**  
(*Rana catesbeiana*)

## DID YOU KNOW:

- Missouri has 25 species and subspecies of frogs and toads; 12 of them live in the Kansas City area.
- Frogs and toads have to close their eyes to swallow. This blinking motion pushes the eyes down into the upper part of the animal's mouth and helps push the food down the its throat!

## EATING HABITS:

- Because they are amphibians, frogs and toads have separate diets at different states of their lives. When they are tadpoles, they eat aquatic plants - especially algae; as adults, they eat insects, small spiders and worms.
- Surprisingly, frogs and toads won't eat anything that doesn't move! They don't stalk their prey; but wait until it gets into "tongue-snapping" range. When a bug is close enough, the sticky tongue (which is actually attached to the front of its lower jaw) whips out, captures the prey, and snaps it back into the amphibian's mouth. This tongue-flip takes only 15/100 of a second, much to fast to be seen with the human eye!

## **THE YOUNG:**

In the springtime, females return to the water to lay long strings of jelly-coated eggs. As the eggs are released, the males fertilize them. Missouri's frogs and toads, like all amphibians, are born in the water and spend the first half of their lives as tadpoles. They remain underwater and breathe using gills just like a fish. But as they continue to grow, they lose their tails, gain two pairs of legs and begin breathing air. This change, or metamorphosis, takes about 2 months.

## **HABITAT (HOME):**

Frogs and toads prefer different types of habitat.

- Once they are adults, toads live on land. They need vegetation (to hide in), and moist, cool soil with lots of bugs. Toads build short burrows in which they hide from predators as well as to ambush their prey.
- Frogs remain semi-aquatic. They are found along the edges of ponds and rivers, on mud flats and on gravel bars. Even treefrogs stay near water.

## **DEFENSIVE HABITS:**

Frogs and toads defend themselves in several.

- Frogs depend on their ability to jump to escape.
- Toads, on the other hand, produce a terrible-tasting skin-secretion; most predators avoid them as a result. When a toad finds itself in danger it will inflate its body and lower its head to form a large ball. If hiding between rocks the inflated toad will be hard to pull free.

## **UNUSUAL FACTS:**

- Only the males sing. He inflates a sac in his throat like a balloon and forces air across his vocal cords. Male frogs and toads can even sing underwater!!
- The largest Missouri toad, the American toad, is about 3 inches long; females are generally larger than males.
- Bullfrogs are the largest frog in Missouri. They can be as large as 6 inches long.