**![MCAN01726_0000[1]]()**

**Frogs and toads**

Frogs belong to the zoological class called *Amphibia*. Amphibians are cold-blooded animals with a backbone (vertebrates). They differ from reptiles in that they lack scales and generally return to water to breed.

**What exactly is a frog?**

**What exactly is a toad?**

The term toad tends to refer to "True Toads" who are members of the family *Bufonidae*, containing more than 300 species.

These types of toads are characterized by:

 stubby bodies with short back legs

 warty and dry skin

 poison glands behind the eyes

 laying eggs in long chains.



True Toads can be found worldwide except in Australasia, polar regions, Madagascar, and Polynesia, though Bufo marinus has been artificially introduced into Australia and some South Pacific islands.

**Some frogs are like toads….**

The physical distinctions between frogs and toads can easily get blurred because sometimes their features appear mixed or less obvious, and certain species even fall into both categories. It is not uncommon, for example, to find a warty skinned frog that isn't a toad, or even a slimy toad! Even the more invisible stuff like cartilage structure has been found to sometimes fit both categories!

**The life cycle of frogs and toads**

 Egg

 Tadpole

 Tadpole with legs

 Froglet/young toad

 Frog/toad

**Egg**

Frogs and Toads tend to lay many eggs because there are many hazards between fertilization and full grown frogs! Those eggs that die tend to turn white or opaque. The lucky ones that actually manage to hatch still start out on a journey of many perils.

Life starts right as the central yolk splits in two. It then divides into four, then eight, until an embryo is formed. Soon, the embryo starts to look more and more like a tadpole, getting longer and moving about in it's egg.

Usually, about 6-21 days after being fertilized, the egg will hatch. Most eggs are found in calm or static waters, to prevent getting too rumbled about in infancy!

**Tadpole**

Shortly after hatching, the tadpole still feeds on the yolk, which is in its stomach. The tadpole has poorly developed gills, a mouth, and a tail. They usually will stick themselves to floating weeds in the water using little sticky organs. Then, 7 to 10 days after the tadpole has hatched, it will begin to swim around and feed on algae.

After about 4 weeks, the gills start getting grown over by skin, until they eventually disappear. The tadpoles get teeny tiny teeth which help them grate food turning it into soupy oxygenated particles. They have long coiled guts that help them digest as much nutrients from their diets as possible.

By the fourth week, tadpoles can actually be fairly social creatures. Some even interact and school like fish!

**Tadpole with legs**

After about 6 to 9 weeks, little tiny legs start to sprout. The head becomes more distinct and the body elongates. By now the diet may grow to include larger items like dead insects and even plants.

The arms will begin to bulge where they will eventually pop out, elbow first.

After about 9 weeks, the tadpole looks more like a teeny frog with a really long tail. It is now well on it's way to being almost full grown!

**Young Frog, or Froglet**

By 12 weeks, the tadpole has only a teeny tail stub and looks like a miniature version of the adult frog. Soon, it will leave the water, only to return again to lay more eggs and start the process all over again!

**Frog**

By between 12 to 16 weeks, depending on water and food supply, the frog has completed the full growth cycle. Some frogs that live in higher altitudes or in colder places might take a whole winter to go through the tadpole stage...others may have unique development stages that vary from your "traditional" tadpole-in-the-water type life cycle.

Now these frogs will start the whole process again...finding mates and creating more frogs.