

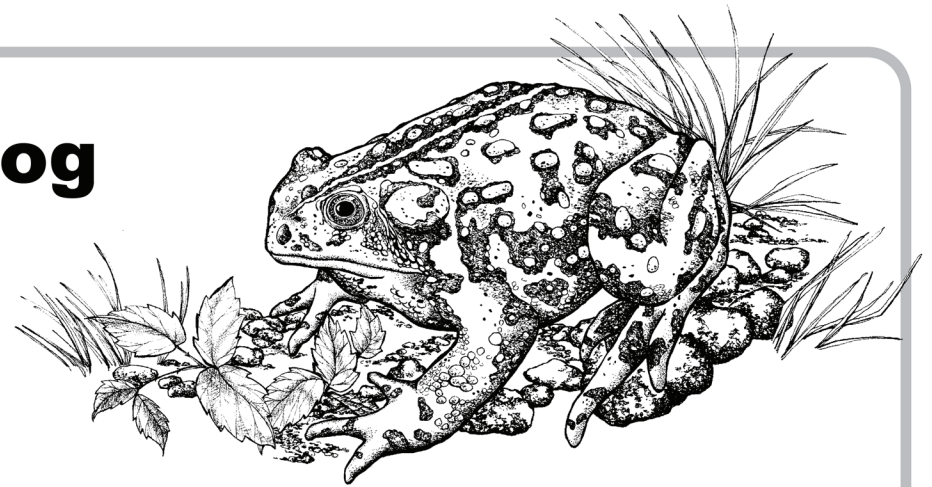
The Year of the Frog

Frogs, toads, and salamanders are amphibians. So are newts and caecilians. **Amphibian** means double life. Amphibians live part of their life in water and part on land. To begin the life cycle, adult amphibians lay and fertilize eggs in water. The eggs hatch into larvae that breathe through gills. Frog and toad larvae are called tadpoles. They have gills beneath their skin. Salamander larvae have feathery external gills. Their gills are on the outside of their bodies.

Amphibians are vertebrates. They have a backbone and an internal skeleton. Frogs, toads, and salamanders are carnivores or meat-eaters. They prey on other animals—usually insects—to eat. There are ectothermic or cold-blooded. That means that their body temperature is the same as the air around them.

Frogs and salamanders have smooth, moist skin that is often covered with a protective layer of mucus. They must stay moist to stay alive. Toads have bumpy skin and can tolerate being away from water longer.

These animals do not drink water through their mouths. Amphibians absorb water through pores (small holes) in their skin. Unfortunately, their porous skin also allows pollutants to easily enter their bodies. If the water is contaminated, the toxins will be absorbed through their skin.



Because they are sensitive to pollution, amphibians are indicators of potential environmental threats to other animals and humans.

Along with pollution, a fungal disease is affecting amphibians in Colorado and around the world. The fungus, called **Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis**, or BD, infects the skin of amphibians. Amphibians infected with BD cannot drink and larvae cannot breathe. Currently, BD is untreatable.

Why is 2008 the Year of the Frog? Earth is facing a severe mass extinction. It may be the worst since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. One-third to one-half of the planet's 6,000 amphibian species—which have thrived for 360 million years—are in danger of extinction. The world's leading conservationists have joined together to name 2008 "The Year of the Frog" to address the crisis. The official "kick-off" date is Leap Day—February 29, 2008!

You can help protect amphibians! Do not move frogs, toads, or salamanders from one place to another. This can spread disease. Also, try to keep rivers, streams, and ponds clean!

Do not put trash or waste of any kind in water. You can also join in citizen monitoring projects, like the Colorado Herpetofaunal Atlas.

