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Pacific Chorus Frog

Pseudacris regilla

by T. Norris and S. Sells

The Pacific chorus frog, which used to be known as the Pacific treefrog, is the most abundant kind (species) of frog in Oregon. Pacific chorus frogs are amphibians, like other frogs, toads, and salamanders. The word amphibian means “double life.” These critters are given this name because they spend some of their life on land and some in water. Frogs also go from living in water as a tadpole to living mostly on land as an adult.

Pacific chorus frogs are one of 3,800 different species of frogs and toads in the world. The largest number of frog species live in tropical areas, but frogs also live in subpolar areas and many places in between. Pacific chorus frogs are found in forests, mountains, and grasslands.

Do you know the difference between frogs and toads? Toads have dry, warty skin and short back legs. Frogs have moist, smooth skin and long back legs.



Where they live and why

Pacific chorus frogs are found from southern British Columbia (Canada) to southern Baja California (Mexico). They live in the western United States,

including all of Oregon. They can live in many different types of habitats, including wooded areas, meadows, pasture, and towns and cities. They usually live close to the ground in grass and shrubs. When the time comes for the frogs to lay their eggs, they must live near water, but during the rest of the year they don't have to.

In the winter, frogs hibernate. They hide in leaves, logs, and mud to stay warm. Hibernation is important for frogs because they are ectotherms (cold-blooded). This means that their body temperature is controlled by the temperature of the air.



Photo: Corel Corporation

Frogs need to live near water when they lay their eggs in the spring.

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Species description

Pacific chorus frogs grow to about 2 inches long. They range from bright green to brown, reddish, or gray. They have a dark mark that goes from their nostrils to their shoulders and looks like a mask. Some have dark stripes and spots on their backs. They can change color to match their background.

Many frogs have webbing between their toes to help them swim, but these frogs' toes have little webbing. Instead, they have sticky pads on the tips of their toes. The pads allow them to climb plants in search of insects and spiders.

Tadpoles of this species are brown. Including their tail, they reach almost 2 inches long.

In the spring, male frogs find pools and ponds and call females to these spots. When you hear frogs croaking in the spring, they probably are Pacific chorus frogs. The males hide in grass and shrubs and fill up their throat with air to make their call.

A female lays 400 to 750 eggs each year. She lays the eggs in groups of 10 to 70, which are held together by a slimy jelly. The groups usually look like small, loose clusters and are attached by jelly to grass, stems, and sticks in the water. The eggs seem lumpy and mostly clear with dark specks.

In about 10 to 12 days, the eggs hatch into tadpoles. The tadpoles mostly eat algae and dead plants

and animals. Like fish, they breathe through gills.

Tadpoles go through metamorphosis

(a change in shape or form) to change from living in water to living on land. They grow legs and lose their tails. They lose their gills and develop lungs. They go from being herbivores (plant eaters) to carnivores, meaning they eat bugs and other living creatures. Pacific chorus frog tadpoles usually are about 2 months old when they become frogs and are only $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long.

The small adults need lots of food to grow to full size. They eat spiders and insects, including beetles and ants.

Pacific chorus frogs have many predators. The tadpoles are eaten by insects, fish, snakes, birds, mammals, and other frogs. The adult frogs are eaten by hawks, owls, skunks, raccoons, snakes, and other critters.



Pacific chorus frogs begin life as tadpoles and grow into frogs in about 2 months.



Photo: © Joyce Gross



Photo: © Joyce Gross

Male frogs croak in the spring to attract females.

Creating habitat



If you have ponds or wetlands nearby, you may be able to attract frogs to your property. Providing areas with tall grass and shrubs will provide cover for frogs to hide from predators. Frogs also can use other types of cover, such as logs, rocks, and brush piles. If appropriate for your school or home, you might consider creating your own garden pond.

A pond should be at least 20 inches deep and should have about half open water and half plants. Plants are important to frogs because they supply oxygen, hiding places, and places to attach eggs. They also are attractive homes for the spiders and insects that frogs eat.

Algae are important as food for the tadpoles, but too much algae is bad for your pond. The sun makes algae grow. Having the right amount of plants will shade the pond and control the amount of algae that grows.

It is best to use plants that are native (found naturally in your area). You can use a mix of submerged (underwater) plants, floating plants, and marginal (growing on the banks) plants. See the list of recommended plants on this page.

Ponds that dry out in late summer are good for Pacific chorus frogs. Fish and bullfrogs that eat chorus frogs cannot survive in a temporary pond. Bullfrogs are not native to Oregon and feed heavily on tadpoles and other native critters.



Frogs may be attracted to an artificial pond in the spring when they are ready to lay their eggs.

Native plants for ponds

Submerged plants

Coontail, *Ceratophyllum demersum*

Elodea, *Elodea canadensis*

Floating leaf plants

Water fern, *Azolla mexicana*

Watershield, *Brasenia schreberi*

Duckweed, *Lemna minor*

Marginal plants

Great water-plantain, *Alisma plantago-aquatica*

Inflated sedge, *Carex vesicaria*

Spike rush, *Eleocharis palustris*

Wapato (duck potato, arrowhead), *Sagittaria latifolia*

Hardstem bulrush, *Scirpus acutas*

Wool grass, *Scirpus cyperinus*

Small-fruited bulrush, *Scirpus microcarpus*

Soft-stem bulrush, *Scirpus validus*

Cattail, *Typha latifolia*

Photo: Nancy Allen

Photo: Corel Corporation



Pacific chorus frogs can change color quickly to blend in with their surroundings.

Fun facts



The croaking sounds that these frogs make often are used as background sounds in nighttime movie scenes.



These frogs can change color quickly, ranging from tan to green, so that they can blend into the background better.

Learn more!

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Photo: Corel Corporation

Pacific chorus frogs are recognizable by their prominent stripe.



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