



Amphibians and Reptiles

16 The Frog and Toad Orchestra

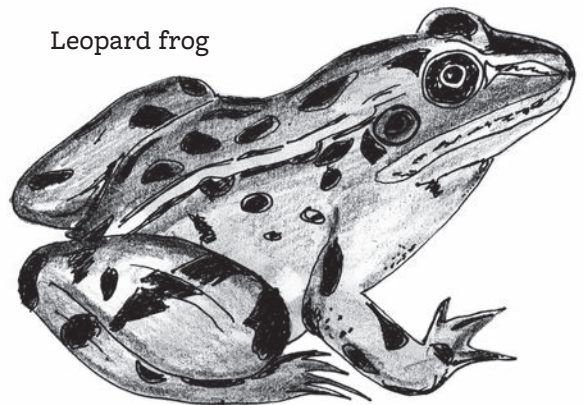
- **You'll learn:** The songs of your local frogs and toads.
- **You'll need:** Frog song descriptions, six or more participants.
- **Background:** One of the wonders of spring is to listen to the melodious strains of an amphibian orchestra, courtesy of your local frogs and toads. Frogs sing for the same reason birds do: the males are trying to attract a mate, and many species are also fighting for territory. To appreciate this natural concert, walk to a nearby marsh, swamp or bog in early spring, just as the Sun is starting to set. Remember to use focused hearing (page 270). Depending on where you live, listen for the high, piercing peep of a spring peeper, or maybe the trilling bursts of sound from the chorus frog. By late spring, you might also hear the low *jug-o-rum* of the bullfrog. Some species call earlier during spring, some later. During the day, you might even hear the bird-like trill of a species such as the gray treefrog. To learn to identify the frog songs in your province or state, go to frogwatch.ca (Canada) or aza.org/frogwatch/ (U.S.).

- **Procedure:** Explain to the children that you are the conductor and they are the various frog and toad species found in your region. Use the table (opposite) as a guide. Have the children imitate each of the sounds as best they can. Listen to the real sounds of frogs by going to the websites mentioned above.

As a conductor, you need to give clear signals to your orchestra. When you point to a frog species, it begins to sing. When you cross your hands and swipe them outwards (like a referee), they stop singing. When you raise both hands simultaneously upwards, the individual sound becomes louder. When you lower your hands, the sound becomes quieter.

Begin with the wood frog (or the earliest to sing in your region), and add additional frog and toad songs until all the species are singing in joyous chorus. Come to a dramatic crescendo and then fade out. You will have conducted a rendition of a wetland symphony, courtesy of your local frogs and toads!

Leopard frog



SPRING: The Greening Season

Spring Sounds

Species	Region	What they sound like	When they sing
Spring peeper	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests	High <i>peep-peep</i> sound	Early spring
American bullfrog	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests, Great Plains, Northwestern Forested Mountains, North American Deserts, Marine West Coast	Deep, resonant <i>rr-uum</i> or <i>jug-o-rum</i>	Late spring–early summer
Wood frog	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests	Sounds like a quaking duck	Early spring
Green frog	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests	<i>Gulp, gulp</i> deep from the throat	Late spring–early summer
Leopard frog	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests, Great Plains, Northwestern Forested Mountains	A throaty <i>ahhhhhhhhhh....</i>	Early spring
Chorus frog	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests, Great Plains, Northwestern Forested Mountains	Short bursts of trills made with your lips or tongue	Mid- to late spring
Eastern cricket frog	Eastern Temperate Forests	Use your tongue to make <i>click-click-click</i> sounds, reminiscent of pebbles clicked together; cricket-like	Late spring–early summer
Gray treefrog	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests	Slow musical bird like trill lasting 2 to 3 seconds. Use your lips or tongue	Late spring–early summer
Fowler’s toad	Eastern Temperate Forests	Nasal, sheep-like <i>waaaaa</i>	Late spring–early summer
American toad	Eastern Temperate Forests, Northern Forests	A sustained trill from lips or throat, lasting up to 30 seconds	Early to late spring
Western toad	Great Plains, Northwestern Forested Mountains, Marine West Coast	Soft, quickly repeated <i>peep-peep</i>	Late winter–early spring
Great Basin spadefoot toad	North American Deserts	Short, harsh, nasal-sounding snores at 1-second intervals	Late spring–early summer
Great Plains toad	Great Plains	Rapidly repeated, harsh, machine gun-like trill; 20–30 seconds in length	Late spring–midsummer
Plains spadefoot toad	Great Plains	Short, harsh, <i>ouak-ouak</i> barks at 1 second intervals	Late spring–early summer
Pacific treefrog	Marine West Coast	<i>Rib-it, rib-it, rib-it</i>	Late winter–late spring
Red-legged frog	Marine West Coast	Weak series of 5–7 notes lasting 1–3 seconds: <i>uh-uh-uh-uh-uh</i>	Late winter–early summer
Sierran treefrog	Marine West Coast, Northwestern Forested Mountains, North American Deserts	<i>Rib-it</i> or <i>krek-ek</i> , with the last syllable rising in inflection	Nov–July (depending on location)