

## Bullfrog canada

The American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) is a large bullfrog native to Eastern and central North America. Within Canada, it is native to Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and introduced in British Columbia. The bullfrog is the largest frog species in North America. It is known to be an opportunistic predator and will often attempt to eat anything smaller than itself. (See also Frog Species in Canada.)

The larval form of bullfrogs, known as tadpoles, can grow to be more than 10 cm long. They have an oval body and a long tail fin that ends in a point. When they are smaller than 2.5 cm in length, they are black with gold blotches. Once the tadpoles grow larger, they become olive green in colour, with black specks on their back and a cream-yellow stomach.

In winter, bullfrogs typically hibernate underwater as both tadpoles and adults. They settle at the bottom of permanent bodies of water, such as deep ponds, lakes and rivers. Here, the temperature never drops below freezing and oxygen levels remain high enough to sustain the bullfrogs until spring.

Bullfrogs breed from mid-June to late July. Males will gather to call to females, usually on warm, humid or rainy nights. The male's call resembles the roar of a bull from a distance, hence the English name "bullfrog." The French-Canadian name for bullfrog, *Ouaouaron* (a word of Iroquoian origin), is likely meant to imitate the bullfrog's call.

In Canada, the larval stage of the American bullfrog can last for more than two years, a period of time that is unusually long for frogs. In the southern parts of its range, the larval stage can be as short as a few months. After metamorphosis, males reach maturity after one to four years, and females after one to five years or longer. In the wild, American Bullfrogs can live for between 5 and 10 years after metamorphosis. In captivity, they can live up to 16 years.

The appetite of the American Bullfrog is often described as "voracious." They hunt their prey using a sit-and-wait strategy and will attack any animal smaller than itself that passes by. A large part of their diet consists of other frogs, and often other American bullfrog tadpoles and juveniles, which can comprise up to 80 per cent of their diet in some parts of their range. They will also eat invertebrates, mammals, and, occasionally, birds. As tadpoles, bullfrogs eat suspended organic matter, such as algae and small aquatic invertebrates.

Did you know? American bullfrogs aren't the only animals to eat members of their own species. In nature, it is quite common for animals of the same species to eat one another. There are more than 1,300 species worldwide known to engage in cannibalism.

When threatened, bullfrogs will cry out as a form of defense. Juveniles, when alarmed, will let out a quick and

startling squeak as they flee into the water. When grabbed, adult bullfrogs may let out a very loud, high-pitched sound, which can last as long as seven seconds.

Internationally, American bullfrogs are listed as "least concern" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. They have not been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

In some parts of their native range, bullfrogs experienced a decline in the 20th century. This decline was attributed to the unregulated overharvesting of the frogs for food and educational materials as well as habitat loss and pollution. Today, bullfrogs have returned to many of the areas where they were depleted, but it is unknown if overall numbers are increasing or decreasing.

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