

# Frogs at Pacifica

BY PEG PRAG AND KRIS DUBENIC

Pacifica loves our Pacific tree frogs, with their tiny masks and changeable colors. There are also some non-native bullfrogs that eat tree frog tadpoles. The bullfrogs' deep jug-of-rum song is wonderful, but if you have a heron that eats them, say "bon appetit!"

Despite having existed for hundreds of millions of years, frogs are in trouble. A study in *Science* magazine says that the majority of frog species are declining, many up to 90 percent. The US Department of Agriculture says that one-third of amphibian species are at risk of extinction. Frogs face a combination of threats, but the main one is a pathogenic fungus, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (*Bd*), that causes chytridiomycosis (also known as chytrid fungus disease, which kills amphibians by destroying their skin, disrupting their immune systems, and causing heart failure). It has been silently massacring groups of frogs since the late 1970s, though scientists didn't recognize it as the main culprit until the late 1990s. The loss of frogs affects whole ecosystems because frogs are both predators and prey.

**How you can help**

- Let frogs, toads, and bats take care of your insects, rather than use toxic pesticides.
- Tree frogs love to hang out inside vertical tubes, so pound a few PVC pipes

(approximately two inches by three feet) into the ground.

- Terra-cotta pots turned on their sides and partially buried make nice homes.
- Create an outdoor compost pile.
- Provide piles of rocks, logs, and leaves.
- Frogs don't need much space, but they do *need water*. Use a commercial pond liner, a kid's wading pool, or even a plastic bin in the shade, and keep it full of water and a few rocks, sticks, leaves, and moss. Put plants around the edge for shade and cover.

- Drive carefully, watching for frogs.

**Learning about frogs**

During our creek and pond activities at Pacifica, students have the opportunity to follow their curiosities and explore the wonders of such interesting and biodiverse ecosystems. Their curiosity is a gateway for deeper awareness of the processes that are taking place right under their noses. As they discover the plethora of living beings in and around the water, they start to identify the various species. Many beings are at different stages of metamorphosis, such as dragonfly nymphs and caddisfly larvae. The presence of many "sensitive" species, such as frogs, and of "tolerant" species that can withstand pollutants indicates the health of the waterbody and overall ecosystem. This and the presence of keystone species,



Help save Pacific tree frogs! The loss of frogs affects whole ecosystems because frogs are both predators and prey.

such as salmon in the creek, help us if there is anything we humans can do to restore the habitat. Most importantly, all of this is learned while having fun playing together and exploring in the water. After all, learning to truly love and belong in nature is the key ingredient to wanting to help it!

**Fun family Frog Day**

From noon-3 pm Sunday, June 2, come and participate in some of the activities that Outdoor School and field trip kids get to do. Explore water and aquatic insects, learn about frogs, and make frog crafts.

**Pacifica update**

Pacifica is excited to launch its High School Student Leadership Program! In spring 2024, for the very first time, high school students will participate in leadership training and then facilitate fifth- and sixth-graders during three days and two nights of Outdoor School. We are beyond excited to create more opportunities for

young adults to be outside, build career skills, and gain experience as mentors to younger students. We are still recruiting student leaders—visit [pacificagarden.org/education/student-leader-program](http://pacificagarden.org/education/student-leader-program) to learn more and apply!

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**Dreaming with Spring Frogs**

By Peg Prag

Frogs wake from winter, astonished  
to chorus in joy  
every night

Caroling, caroling, caroling  
in gentle rhythmic voices,  
of spring and pond and beauty

Singing, singing, singing  
in gentle rhythmic voices,  
about wonder and what life's all about

Humming, humming, humming  
in gentle rhythmic voices  
that wrap me softly in their sweet,  
hopeful dreams.

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