

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
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The Next Generation

We have restarted The Next Generation column for children. "Frog Egg Hunt" is geared towards 7- to 13- year-olds.

Frog Egg Hunt

Diane L. Burns

Spring is in the air and so is the sound of courting frogs. That means frog eggs may already be in a wet spot near you. Why not go check out the action? Just use these helpful hints and hop to it!



Be prepared. What kinds of eggs will you find? That depends on where you live. Different frogs live in different places. And each kind has its own breeding schedule. Visit your library or a local nature center to find out which frogs are in your area and when they're breeding. Ask a librarian or naturalist to suggest a good guidebook that shows the frogs and describes their eggs. Also, you can find a terrific resource online at eNature.com. With a little help from a parent or teacher, you can create a field guide to the frogs in your area!

Set up a stakeout. Frogs lay their eggs in water to keep them moist. Most frogs prefer water that's calm and shallow. Depending on the kind of frog, that may include anything from a puddle to a pond, a marsh or a swamp, or even the edges of a big lake. Frogs usually stay away from deep or fast-flowing water.

Use your ears. Frog calls can help you pinpoint egg-laying places. And if you recognize the different calls, you can narrow down which eggs to look for. Maybe you could listen to frog calls on a recording borrowed from a library or a nature center.

Know what to look for. Each frog egg starts out as a tiny dark spot surrounded by a thick layer of clear jelly-like stuff. The jelly acts as a kind of shell that protects the egg and the baby frog, or tadpole. As it grows, the tiny tadpole gets longer and curls into a comma shape. Most frogs' eggs form clumps.

Take a closer look. Once you've found some eggs, see if your guidebook can help you identify them. Here are some things to notice: Are the eggs floating at the surface or under the water? Are they attached to plants or not? If they form a clump, is it small or large? Note: toads

and salamanders also lay jelly-covered eggs in water. Most toad eggs form long strings. Many salamanders lay single eggs but the spotted salamander lays eggs in a cluster that can look a lot like a clump of frog eggs.

Be careful! Wear the right clothes for the weather and the place. Be patient and move slowly and quietly in the animals' home. When you do find some eggs, look but it's best to not disturb. If you touch them, do so very gently. And watch your step! Don't be caught off guard by a patch of deep water or mud. Always make sure an adult goes with you or knows where you are.

Keep it up. Don't just forget about your eggs after you've found them. Go back to visit them every few days. How do the eggs change over time? Are any

being gobbled up? If they are, by what? How long do the eggstake to hatch? What are the tadpoles like? Think of other stuff to check on. "Hoppy" investigating!

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