

York Region

Families

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Frog days of summer

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You can't get warts from a toad but if you kiss a frog, you will turn into a prince.

Human interest in creepy crawlly things has certainly passed the test of time. Despite the advent of fast-paced and complex technology, Mother Nature continues to lead the parade — frogs and toads, bumble bees, grasshoppers, butterflies, snails, slugs, snakes and bugs still spell-bind children.

Since frogs are allusive and hard to catch, they're often sited as children's favourite. And, there's no scarcity of croaking swamp-dwellers. Amphibian experts report that, world-wide, there are more than 4,000 species of frogs. Of course, we all agree: There's magic when frogs sing. No one wants a silent spring.

"Frogs are a real challenge," said Diana Teal, co-ordinator of the Toronto Zoo's adopt-a-pond program.

Frogs are living creatures, Teal stressed. "Frogs should be treated with respect."

When venturing into the amphibians' world, the following rules should be taught to children.

- Try to use the same path each time you go to your wetland so you don't trample the vegetation too much.

- If you use bug spray, make

sure it does not contain Deet. No matter what kind of bug spray is used, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before you handle any creature. If there is insect repellent or sunscreen on your arms or clothing do not allow frogs or other animals to come in contact with it.

- Always put a creature back exactly where you found it

- Don't touch the eggs of any wildlife. Instead, observe the eggs where they are.

- Keep tadpoles in water and above all else, be careful not to squish them.

Just like fish, tadpoles have gills and can only breathe under water. If you want to observe tadpoles closely, put them in a container but only for a few seconds, Teal said.

While adult frogs are good at floating on top of the water and keeping their heads up, a metamorphous still has its big, goofy tadpole tail that weighs it down.

"It's not good at floating. It needs to lean on something sturdy or it could drown. If you put a metamorphous in a container, make sure you put sticks in with it or some floating vegetation so that it can have somewhere to rest," Teal added.

To keep frogs healthy, happy and hopping, Teal is offering a few more rules.

- Keep frogs moist.

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Eric Steven, 4, is among the newest brew of young people to head to the swamps in search of frogs, toads, snakes and anything that hops, jumps or slithers. Here, he catches his prize frog and gives it a big froggy kiss. Legend has it, kissing a frog will turn a boy into a prince. (Or will the frog turn into a prince?)



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