bullfrog

Rana catesbeiana

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Amphibia
Order:	Anura
Family:	Ranidae

Features

The bullfrog ranges from 3 1/2 to eight inches long. It is the largest frog native to the U.S. The body is brown, olive, or green with dots or blotches. The webbing on its feet extends to the toe tips. The tympanum (eardrum) is wider than the eye in males and nearly the same size as the eye in females. The vocal pouch is in the middle of the throat.

Natural History

The bullfrog lives in lakes, rivers, marshes, ponds, and creeks. The adult bullfrog is solitary and wary. It usually is found at the water's edge. It eats almost any living thing that it can catch and swallow, although crustaceans and insects make up most of its diet. Breeding occurs from late April through August. The male's call is "jug-o-rum" or "br-wum." A male will defend its territory from other male bullfrogs. The female deposits about 20,000 eggs in water. Hatching occurs in less than a week. Tadpoles metamorphose (change to the land-based frog) after about 14 months. Tadpoles may grow to over six inches long. The bullfrog often out competes smaller species like leopard frogs for survival. Bullfrogs and crawfish frogs are the only Iowa frogs that require two years for their tadpoles to develop. This is the frog that provides frog legs for American restaurants. Historically, the bullfrog was not found in most of northern Iowa.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, & reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.