



Audubon at Home in Northern Virginia

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Gray Tree Frog

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Green, Pickerel and Gray Tree Frogs

Sensitive to pollution, amphibians are barometers of habitat health and indicators of environmental change. The presence of frogs signals a healthy aquatic habitat because of their aquatic larval stage and breathable skin. They are 100% beneficial as agents of insect control and have beautiful forms and provide evening serenades. Pickerel frogs, not pictured, have tan skin with rows of brown spots. Attracting these creatures makes a fun family project and provides excellent learning opportunities. Frogs have been declining from a variety of causes including the introduction of exotic fish, wetland destruction, water pollution, fear of mosquitoes leading to elimination of their habitat, over-zealous mowing along pond edges, and collecting.

What Frogs Need

Food: Adult frogs eat insects, spiders, and other frogs. Tadpoles dine on natural detritus (leaves) and, in some cases, other tadpoles.

Breeding: Shallow wetlands are popular among our local frog species. Vernal pools, which naturally lack fish, are also productive breeding sites.

Shelter: Dead wood, both standing and fallen, and wetland vegetation provide shade and places to hide from predators.

Other: Pesticides and other pollution, cats, lawn mowers and string trimmers present deadly hazards for frogs and tadpoles. Fish in small habitats, such as a backyard pond, can eat all the eggs a frog deposits, thus inhibiting successful frog reproduction. Habitat conversion for buildings and recreational fields has claimed countless vernal wetlands.

Resources:

Meadow seed mix—Ernst Conservation Seeds
Native plants—DeBaggio Herbs, Nature By Design, Hyla Brook Farm, Merrifield Garden Center and other local nurseries
Toad abode—local garden centers
Pond liners—local home improvement stores
Rain barrels—Eagle Peak Containers (www.epcontainers.net)
Composters.com, AquaBarrel.com and other online sources

Model Frog Habitats:

Huntley Meadows Park—www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley/
Bles Park—www.loudoun.gov/prcs/parks/other.htm
Ellanor C. Lawrence Park—www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ecl/

How You Can Help

- Meadow patches attract insects for food.
- Provide a pesticide- and fertilizer-free water source for tadpoles but that includes dead leaves and woody debris.
- A backyard pond or wetland, 24" deep or less, without fish, should be placed in an area that gets a mix of sun and shade. Provide woody debris, leaves, and vegetation around the edge with a few branches in the water. Create a shallow area along the edge, 4-5" deep, where frogs can enter and exit.
- Logs, dead trees, toad abodes, and even pipes and boards provide resting and hiding places for your amphibian neighbors.
- Avoid using pesticides and install a rain barrel to catch rainwater and prevent it from running off into streams.
- Keep cats indoors.
- Don't mow to the edge of the water, where frogs hide and hunt for insects.
- Other native critters will keep mosquito populations in check, so fish are an unnecessary addition to the pond.*
- Support stream and wetland restoration in your jurisdiction.



Green Frog

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Visit audubonva.org for more information and other fact sheets

*Bt rings can be used if you still have a mosquito population. Bt is a naturally occurring bacteria that only attacks fly larvae and does not harm amphibians.

†Bull frogs are great, but they do eat everything else so try not to support too many on your property.