

# School-to-Nature



## Wood Frog

The Wood Frog is named for its habitat; look for these frogs on tree bark and on the forest floor. A wood frog's most distinct characteristic is a wide black marking like a mask across the eyes and extending back to the shoulder. This coloring is for camouflage in the forest. The bodies can be varying shades of brown, red, green or gray. Female wood frogs tend to be more brightly colored, which is strange and wonderful, since it's rare that a female of any species is the more brightly colored one. Adults are 1.5 to 3.25 inches in length. 1.5 inches is very small, shorter than the length of most thumbs.

These frogs have adapted to cold climates like ours by freezing over the winter. They take shelter in leaf litter, then they stop breathing and their heart stops beating. Their bodies produce a special antifreeze substance that prevents ice from freezing within their cells, even while the spaces between the cells turn to ice. When the weather gets warmer the frogs thaw and begin feeding and mating again. They are the only frogs that can live north of the Arctic Circle.

Wood frogs eat insects, spiders, worms, slugs, and snails. They fall prey to snakes, snapping turtles, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, birds. Tadpoles (young frogs) are eaten by beetles, salamanders, wood turtles and other wood frogs.

They are one of the first frogs to begin breeding, usually in early March. You'll know this season because the males will be making a "quaak-quaak-quaak" repeated call, day and night. Females lay 1,000 to 3,000 eggs in water; these frogs need only a springtime water supply (like a deep puddle) for egg-laying as they are not water-dwelling frogs.

A wood frog's life expectancy is about three years. Wood Frog habitat includes most of the Caledonia Conservancy's wooded areas. If you find one, please leave it alone, or handle with extreme care and return it to its habitat right away.



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