

## THE CHORUS FROG

It was springtime, the sun was warm and the frogs that lived in the swamps and woodlands were getting ready to lay their eggs. Frogs lay hundreds of eggs in a gelatin-like mass in the spring. Within two weeks the eggs hatch and turn into tadpoles. These small creatures have little chance of survival. Needing air to breathe they propel themselves to the surface, where they are easily seen by predators who gobble them up like sweet tasting candy. But some do survive and by the end of the summer will reach maturity and join their brethren, filling the swamp with their perfectly synchronized song. Getting to this point in adulthood is challenging because being born the size of a dot, with no parental protection, does not make things safe for these small amphibians. However, survival is meant for many, and as they grow, they undergo an amazing transformation.

From those little dots grows a fat little body and a long tail. When tadpoles are born, they are strictly vegetarian, eating plant and other green matter from the pond. As they grow, their diet changes to insects in the water and even tiny fish. Larger fish, salamanders and birds are the tadpoles' biggest predators, accounting for most of the death experienced by this species. As the tadpoles grow their body takes on a new form. Four little legs suddenly appear, with little webbed feet to help propel them along and eventually give them buoyancy to keep their heads above water. They will also eventually allow them to jump fast enough to escape predators.

As the spring progresses the little tadpoles are no more, having been replaced by the shape of a frog. These little frogs, after their long journey to get here, will soon be able to pull themselves up onto land and bask in the warm sunshine, just like the older members of their species. As the summer grows, so do the newborn frogs, taking on characteristics of an adult. Their diet consists of insects now, either caught airborne or in the water.

As the summer turns into fall, the frogs notice a change in the temperature, indicating their long sleep is near. They hide under logs or other debris and stay there throughout the winter. Chorus frogs can survive freezing, thawing out when spring arrives.

Once again you will know it is truly spring when you hear the chorus of the frogs, including those tiny tadpoles that were born last year. They are now well on their way to becoming egg-laying adults, helping this species procreate and keep its place in the forests and ponds.

If you hear these tiny frogs, enjoy their music, and in times of stress let your mind wander back to their symphony; a change of feelings will prevail, and peace of mind will follow. This is one of God's simple little pleasures put in place for humans to enjoy. Try to find others and your life will take on new meaning, as you become one with nature.

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