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Birds whistle and chirp while pigs oink. But did you know that frogs do so too?

Up until a few years ago, my idea of a frog was a drab, dowdy, green-brown creature, with a hoarse, disagreeable croak. Little did I know how wrong I was or how one eventful evening would turn the frog into one of my favourite creatures.

One wet, foggy evening, I was with some friends in Amboli, in the North Western Ghats. I was in an oversized rain coat, braving the chilly downpour. Burly gumboots were my protection



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sac. Male frogs have vocal sacs, which they use to amplify their calls.

From the marshes

Each species of frog has a distinct call, so, there is no chance of the female getting confused. We could hear clicks, chirps, oinks and even whistles. The whistles, especially, intrigued me. They belonged to the Wrinkled Frog. We saw one broad, snouted and wrinkly skinned individual sitting on a rock by a stream. Beside it was a cluster of shiny pearls. But wait...they were not pearls... they were eggs! Frog eggs do not have hard shells like bird eggs do. They are transparent, and you can see tadpoles developing within them.

Frogs are choosy about where they breed. Unlike wrinkled frogs that prefer being near fast moving streams, Paddy Field Frogs like stagnant pools of water. They get together in large numbers near such pools and croak away. It was astonishing to see such small creatures, barely a few centimetres long making such a din!

Amboli is known for a special toad, the Amboli toad, named for the only place on earth where it exists. A species deemed critically endangered, it is indeed fussy about where it lays eggs. It does so in small pools of water formed on special kinds of rocks – lateritic rocks.

The next calls we heard came from a tree that had some dubious-looking frothy globules hanging from its branches. These were frog nests made by the Malabar gliding frog. Yes, it can actually glide in air. This bright green frog has a crinkly red webbing between its fingers and toes that gives it a lift when it leaps from one tree to another.

In fact, all frogs have tiny adaptations which help them live in their chosen habitat. Frogs that live in water have webbing between their toes, tailor-made for swimming. Frogs that live on trees have tiny discs on their toes, enabling them to climb. Some burrowing frogs have a bulge on their feet which they use for digging.

What fascinated me the most was the sheer variety of frogs and the range of specific habitats they lived in – a vivid, colourful Fungoid frog swimming in a mulch-y swamp, a Skittering frog floating comfortably in a pond, a stout narrow-mouthed frog staring at me with beady eyes from the crevices of a rocky wall...



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