

**Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times  
by Sanjay Sondhi**

Published on 24 June 2011

**The noisy “nosy” frog**

A few nights ago, just after a heavy shower, I was sitting the balcony of our house. In the distance, I could hear a crescendo of calls. Frogs and toads were celebrating the onset of early rains. As I listened carefully, I could hear at least three different calls- the Common Indian Toad, the Cricket Frog and the Ornate Narrow-mouthed Frog. The Ornate Narrow-mouthed Frog is an interesting frog that can be observed all over Dehradun. I still recall my first encounter with this frog in the wild many years ago. I was on a night walk during the monsoons in the outskirts of Pune. There were puddles of water in the fields bordering the road. From every direction, I could hear this really loud call that sounded like a “breep, breep,....”. The call was similar to running your fingers over the teeth of a comb, but much louder. This should be easy, I told myself, as I started to search for the frog.



Easy-huh! I have taunted nature in this fashion on many times to be immediately put in my place! And so it was on this occasion, too. Approaching one of the puddles of water, I could hear loud calls emanating from the grass. There seemed to be many frogs calling from the same area. However, a fifteen minute search did not reveal any frogs! Each time I got close, all the frogs would stop calling! It must be a large frog, given its loud call, I muttered to myself. Changing my strategy, I sat down on the

grass, very close to where I had last heard one of the frog's calls. A few minutes later, one of the frogs starting calling again, and soon, all the other frogs began to call in chorus. I was being driven crazy-the calls were so very loud, seemed to come from all around me, and yet I could not see a thing! Kneeling on the grass, I began to search with greater care; moving grass blades aside and turning over small leaves. My perseverance paid off! A tiny frog, no more than 2 cm in size, peered out at me from under a few blades of grass. The frog had a very pointed snout, was brown in colour with inverted arrow-like marking on the back. Once I had located the frog, the others became easier to find. I discovered that there were numerous frogs in the same area. Glorious, gregarious and garrulous!

Over the years, I observed these frogs with fascination. The calling frogs are all males, looking to attract the female. The males compete, each one trying to call louder than the next, in the hope of attracting a female! Apparently, the louder you can call, the better your chances of finding a female to mate with. I wondered-does this apply to the human species as well!

Feedback on this column is welcome at [sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com](mailto:sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com)

Making a difference: I hope you are continuing to conserve water. Just because the monsoons are here does not mean that water can be wasted! A large part of the rain water goes to top up the underground water table, from where many people still draw water. Hence, the less we waste, the more water there will be us during times of shortage. So continue your efforts in water conservation-plug those leaky taps, use water buckets to wash vehicles and don't leave taps running when you brush your teeth!

Photograph caption: Ornate Narrow-mouthed Frog

© Sanjay Sondhi