



# Four Flies Flash

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## *Specials*

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*The African Bull frog (Pyxicephalus adspersus) are aggressive and have been known to bite. Males can weigh up to 4 kg.*  
-Darryn Rogers-  
[www.FrogForum.net](http://www.FrogForum.net)

*May you all  
have a blessed  
festive season!*



## Frogs of South Africa

How a frog can change into a prince is something I just cannot figure out. How anyone can merely think that a frog can be kissed is bizarre. On the other hand, if I look at the tons of tadpoles in my dam, I can easily understand that frogs can be seen as a symbol of fertility. Despite my aversion for frogs, I must admit that they are a very interesting species. They are extremely adaptable and are thus found in a wide range of habitats. Of the 110 species in South Africa, 48 can be found in Mpumalanga, mostly in the wetter, eastern parts.

Frogs are amphibians. These truly ancient creatures are so named because most species live both in water and on land. They have a bony skeleton, four limbs, and practice external fertilization. Frogs are ectothermic which means they depend on environmental heat sources rather than metabolic heat sources.

There are two families of frogs: Ranidae (frogs) and Bufonidae (toads). Ranidae (frogs) have a smooth slimy skin, webbed hind feet adapted for leaping and swimming and they lay eggs in clusters. Bufonidae (toads) have a warty, dry skin, short hind legs adapted for walking instead of hopping and they lay eggs in long chains.

Both male and female frogs have vocal cords. They have a variety of calls. Advertising calls are to attract females of the same species. Males use aggressive calls to avoid confrontation when they come too close to one another. When seized by a predator, frogs release distress calls with a scream-like quality.

Breeding season is in the warmer months of the year. The smaller male clasp the female from behind to ensure that the eggs and sperm are in close proximity for external fertilization to take place. About 6-21 days after fertilization the eggs hatch and the tadpoles feed on the remaining yolk of their eggs. After 4 weeks the gills start to disappear, thereby marking the transition from gill-breathing to air-breathing. Between 6-9 weeks the legs start to grow and by 12 weeks the tadpoles have only a tail stub. They now look like a miniature version of the adult frog.

Frogs are carnivores and feed on insects, worms and slugs. Bullfrogs will eat creatures as large as mice, birds or even newborn water snakes. They are thus invaluable as "eco-friendly pesticides". If I listen to the frog choir on the farm, or watch the countless tadpoles, I am pretty sure that there should not be a single mosquito around this season!

- Africa Nature Training -

## Editorial

Judging by the decorations and carols playing wherever you go, it is time for Christmas shopping again. Shopping centres pay thousands of rands to spruce up their buildings for the festive season. Albeit beautiful, it always fills me with

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sadness, for it reminds me of death. We lost my father to lung cancer before Christmas some years ago and I remember entering a magnificently decorated centre, feeling heavy with loss and un-cried tears. That feeling stayed with me through the years.

This year, once again, I realized that no matter how bright the lights or how expensive the presents are, nothing can replace a loved one. To my mind, the festivities should be more about people than things. Possibly the gift of your time and undivided and caring attention is worth more than anything else. Celebrations should be about family and friends wrapping you in a blanket woven of love and affection. Our passion and devotion should be for our people. Only then would this season be truly commemorative.

Carpe diem!

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## Four Flies News

### 1. We are not increasing our rates for 2011

2. Our September/October newsletter, *Four Flies Flash*, can be read on our website at <http://www.4flies.co.za/newsletter.html>
3. Our dams were stocked with 1kg – 1.5kg rainbow trout.
4. Visit us at [www.4flies.co.za](http://www.4flies.co.za) to check availability online. You can also conveniently book online.

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