



Photo: Ed Gregory



WASHINGTON STATE  
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE  
Washington Invasive  
Species Council

# American Bullfrog



An adult bullfrog with spots on the back.  
Photo: Ansel Oommen



An adult bullfrog has large eardrums behind their eyes. Photo: Carl D. Howe

 **Report Sightings**



[invasivespecies.wa.gov](https://invasivespecies.wa.gov)

## What Is It?

The American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) is the largest frog species in North America. It is found in a variety of freshwater habitats, including ponds, marshes, streams, rivers, canals, reservoirs, ditches, shallow wetlands, and stormwater ponds. Bullfrogs compete with, and prey on, a wide range of native species, and may significantly affect native ecological systems such as wetlands.

## Is It Here Yet?

Yes. The bullfrog is found throughout the lowlands of Washington. It entered the state through the aquarium and pet trades, and possibly via after being used in science classes and released into the wild.

## Why Should I Care?

Bullfrogs are predators that eat practically anything they can catch. They can swallow tree frogs, other amphibians and reptiles such as the western pond turtle, minnows, small birds, and young snakes. Introduced bullfrogs have been blamed for native species declines in much of North America.

## What Are Its Characteristics?

- Egg masses are black on top and white underneath. They start as a round, basketball-size mass that flattens over



The underside of the American bullfrog has a spotted pattern. Photo: Micah McDaniel

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time.

- Tadpoles are dark green with black dots, have orange or bronze eyes and opaque yellow underbellies, and are up to 6 inches long.
- Juveniles are green to brown with small black spots, orange or bronze eyes, and a fold of skin from the eye around the eardrum.
- Adults are 7-8 inches, with large, exposed eardrums the size of their eyes, and are green, tan, or dark brown with dark spots and gold eyes.

## How Do I Distinguish It From Native Species?

Native green and bronze frogs have two parallel lines of raised glandular skin between the back and sides; the bullfrog does not have these features. African clawed frogs may be distinguished in that native frogs tend to only inhabit water to breed, otherwise living on land, but near water. Native frogs are smaller, rougher-textured, and less plump-looking than African clawed frogs. Look up native species (Pacific treefrogs, red-legged frogs, Columbia spotted frogs, Oregon spotted frogs, Cascade frogs) for individual distinguishing details.



An adult bullfrog on a lily pad. Photo: Katja Schulz

## How Can We Stop It?

Do not buy or share bullfrogs at any life stage (from eggs to adults). **Do not release unwanted pet frogs into the wild.** Bullfrogs are classified as a Prohibited Aquatic Animal Species in Washington, meaning they may not be possessed, purchased, sold, propagated, transported, or released into state waters. In Washington, bullfrogs only may be caught or killed by angling, hand dip netting, spearing (gigging), or with bow and arrow.

## What Should I Do If I Find One?

Report immediately via the WA Invasives mobile app or reporting web form at <https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/report-a-sighting/>.