



Photo: Brian Gratwicke



# African Clawed Frog



An adult African clawed frog.  
Photo: Simone Des Roches



An adult African clawed frog.  
Photo: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

## What Is It?

The African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*) is a predatory, semi-aquatic frog native to sub-Saharan Africa. It is highly adaptable to diverse environmental conditions and habitats. It reproduces so rapidly that it can double the population and range within ten years. Similar to bullfrogs, the African clawed frog will eat anything that fits in its mouth including other frogs, fish, birds, mammals, and snails.

## Is It Here Yet?

Yes. The African clawed frog was first identified in 2015 in King County and since has been confirmed in three other cities (Bothell, Issaquah, and Lacey). It entered the state through the aquarium and pet trades and possibly after being used in science classes and released.

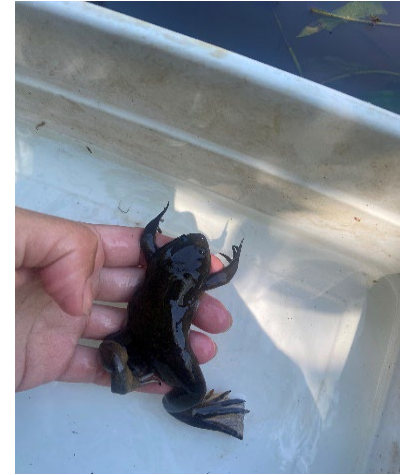
## Why Should I Care?

The African clawed frog harms native ecosystems by competing with native species for resources. It also can introduce harmful pathogens that hurt native amphibians and fish, including salmon. It is important to limit the handling of the frog because of the diseases it carries; anyone who touches an African clawed frog should thoroughly wash their hands. Lastly, water bodies infested with African clawed frogs will be quarantined and closed to public use, which decreases recreational fishing opportunities.



## What Are Its Characteristics?

- A mature frog can grow larger than an average adult fist.
- It does not have eye lids, a tongue, or vocal sacs.
- Olive to brown skin, often with blotches or spots.
- Front feet are not webbed, while back feet are fully webbed and have black, sharp claws.
- A tadpole looks similar to small catfish, with a pair of long barbels that extend from each side of its chin.



An adult African clawed frog. Photo: Kylie Hackett

## 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. Also, native frogs tend to inhabit water only to breed and otherwise live on land 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 more distinguishing details.



An African clawed frog tadpole. Photo: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

## How Can We Stop It?

Don't buy or share these frogs at any life stage (from eggs to adults). **Do not release unwanted pet frogs to the wild.** African clawed frogs are a Prohibited Aquatic Animal Species in Washington, meaning they may not be possessed, purchased, sold, propagated, transported, or released into state waters. In Washington, these frogs 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 webform at

<https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/report-a-sighting/>