

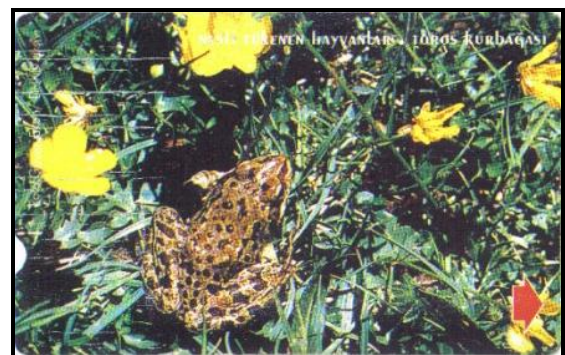
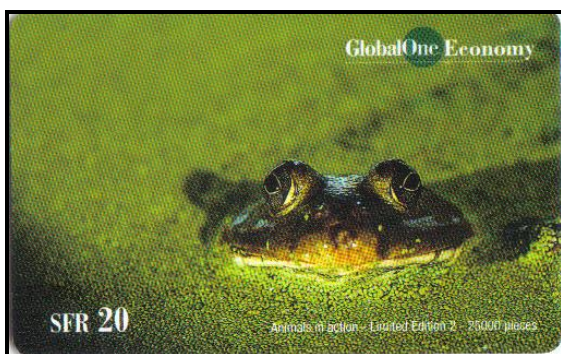
The African Telatelist

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Frogs & Toads - (C.Edwards & W.Stobrawe)

The differences between frogs and toads are very few and are not always clear.

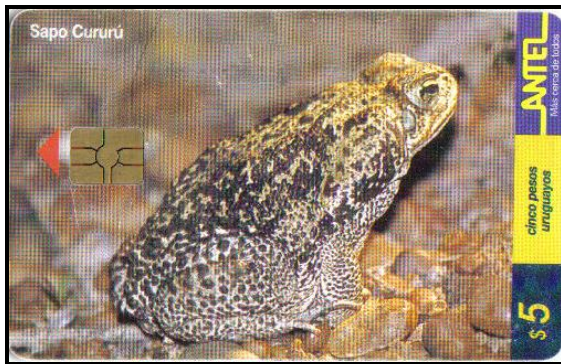
Frogs are generally described as small, smooth-skinned, hairless, cold-blooded, carnivorous amphibian creatures of the order SALIENTIA, especially the web-footed aquatic species of the genus RANA and allied genera.



Above: (Frog phonecards cards from Holland, Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Turkey and Sweden.)

Toads are mostly all of the above, but are terrestrial creatures, of the genus BUFO and related genera.

Toads usually have broader, flatter bodies than frogs. They can also be covered in warts, whereas frogs have smooth skins.



Above: (Toad phonecards cards from Uruguay x2, Spain and Jersey)

Frogs and toads as a rule don't read so there is much confusion as to what is a frog and what is a toad.

RANA and BUFO are the names originally given to European species, but there are many other genera by other names in all parts of the world.

They are found in every continent except Antarctica and in the harshest of deserts.

Generally speaking frogs and toads lay their eggs in or near water. These hatch to become tadpoles which feed on small aquatic life forms, insects and their lava. Within a season they lose their tails, grow legs and emerge from the water as tiny adults.

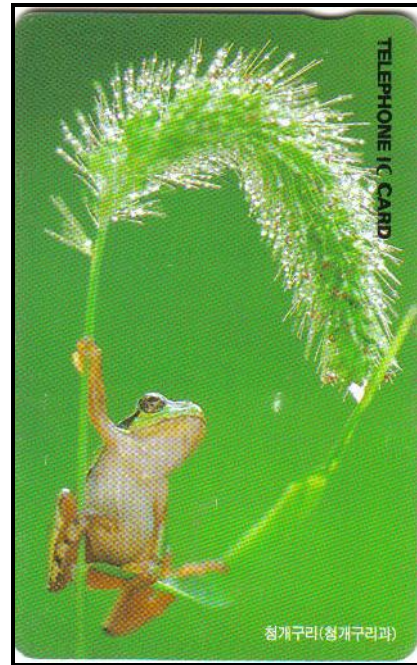
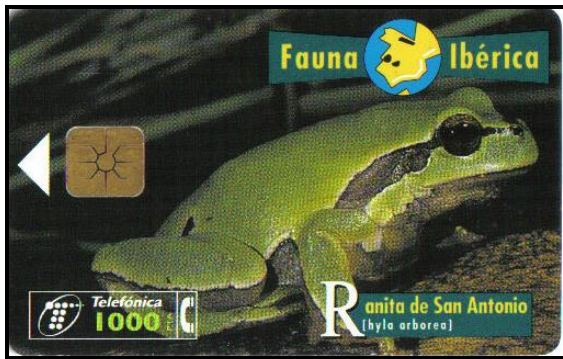
Adults range in size from 1,3cm to 30cm. The largest being the Goliath from West Africa. They live on insects and spiders which they catch with their long sticky tongues. They have long hind legs which assist with swimming and jumping and have the ability to breathe through both their lungs and their skin.

As a protection against predators, many secrete a noxious substance through their skin. Most of these substances just leave a bad taste in the mouth of the predator, but some are poisonous and have been used as dart and arrow poisons by people in the tropics. In Pre-Columbian times the people of America also used the secretions as hallucinatory drugs. Frog-licking was once reported to be a fashionable past time in modern America, It is more likely that the substance was dried and smoked!

In drier areas frogs and toads may hibernate by digging into the ground or hiding under rocks to keep moist and only coming out when it rains. Some just live in burrows and search for ants and termites underground. Cliff Frogs of Texas lay their eggs under rocks and tiny froglets emerge without ever going through the tadpole stage.

The Horned Toad of American is not actually a toad but a lizard. But then Americans could never tell their Amphibians from their Echinate.

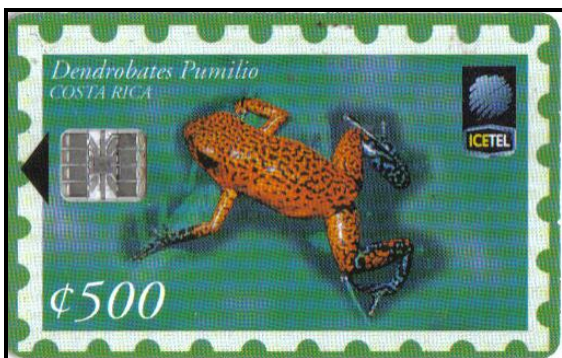
Tree Frogs, of the family HYLIDAE, are found in most parts of the world. They are small, less than 5cm in length and have sticky discs on their feet to assist with climbing. Although most are green, they do have the ability to change colour as camouflage against predators.





Above: (Tree frog phonecards from Bulgaria, Spain, Poland, Cyprus, Korea, Peru, Australia, Italy, Slovakia & Korea)

Many too secrete poisonous substances which are used to poison darts and are brightly coloured as a warning to predators.



Above: (D.PUMILIO phonecard from Costa Rica and D. AZUREUS phonecard from Hungary)

One of these is DENDROBATES PUMILIO, the Strawberry Poison Dart Frog.

It can change its colour into about 30 shades and has such an interesting life cycle that it has become very collectable and therefore endangered in the wild.

The poison it secretes is a bye-product of its diet of Formicine ants and certain mites.

The female lays about half a dozen eggs on a leaf or bromide axil. The male ensures

that they are kept moist by splashing water on them which he carries in a special pouch to the site. When they hatch, the female transports the tadpoles to a nursery puddle in a knot of a tree or bromide front. Each in its own puddle. The female then visits the site every couple of days and lays a few unfertilised eggs in the water as food for the tadpole until it morphs into a frog.

Frogs and toads are much maligned animals, the subject of many superstitions, stories and old wives tales.



Above: (Russian phonecard)

You do not get warts from touching a frog!

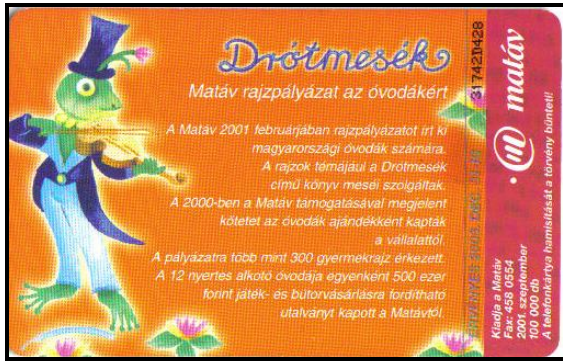
Like cats, they were once believed to be the familiars of witches. Like cats, they were often seen around the cottages of old women. Poisonous mushrooms were called toadstools; seats for these evil creatures. As they were seldom seen in dry weather, frogs were thought to have fallen from the sky with rain.

In Paradise Lost John Milton portrays Satan as a toad pouring poison into Eve's ear.

Terms like "Toady", "Toad eater" and "Slimy Toad", are all nasty names for nasty people.

However, Toad of Toad Hall in Wind in the Willows is a rather elegant and aristocratic fellow.

They appear in folk tales all over the world as these Korean and Hungarian cards show.



Above: Phonecards from Hungary and Korea)

You all know the story of the Frog Prince. I prefer the French version.

“The frog said to the princess, “I was once a handsome prince until an evil witch put a spell on me. But one kiss from you will turn me back into a prince. Then we can move into the castle with my mother. You can prepare my meals, scrub my clothes, clean up after me, bear children, cook for my friends and live happily ever after. Just one kiss and it will all come to pass. That night at dinner, the princess smiled to herself. Not bloody likely, she thought, as she tucked into a dish of frog legs.”

According to Peter Mayle, the frog centre of France is Vittel in the Vosges region, well known for its carbonated water.

My first encounter with les Grenouilles was at the other end of France, in the restaurant of the Relais de la Magdelaine in Provence. The frog tasted a bit like bland chicken – but the Sauce! Rich and creamy, with just a hint of garlic, I must have used a half a loaf of bread mopping it up after I had finished my 6 plump legs.

In China frogs are a sign of good luck.

JIN CHAN, the Money Toad, is the Feng Shui charm of prosperity. It is said to appear at full moon near homes and businesses of people who will soon receive good news. According to legend, JIN CHAN was the greedy wife of one of the Eight Immortals, She was punished for stealing the Peach of Immortality by turning her into a frog. JIN CHAN is depicted as a bullfrog with red eyes and only one hind leg. It is sitting on a pile of Chinese coins with one coin in its month.

According to Feng Shui, it helps attract and protect wealth and guards against bad luck. Money Toad likenesses should never be placed facing the main door, nor in the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen or dining room.

The Chinese, however, also eat frogs. They were once plentiful in the paddy fields and were caught by farmers both for their own use and for sale. Some years ago I visited a rural market near Quang Zou and was astonished by the number of concrete tanks filled with water and jam packed with frogs. Fussy housewives were poking and prodding to find the juiciest and most lively ones for supper.

Today both local and exotic species are farmed in great numbers in China and Indonesia. One of the most popular is the American Bullfrog. Most are exported to France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the USA.

Frogs and toads are beneficial to mankind in many ways.

In the garden they eat large numbers of insects and other flying and crawling things. Although they spawn in water, toads forage far and wide and will take up residence in a garden as long as there is some dark moist place for them to spend their days. They enjoy sitting under an outside light at night waiting for supper to come flying in.

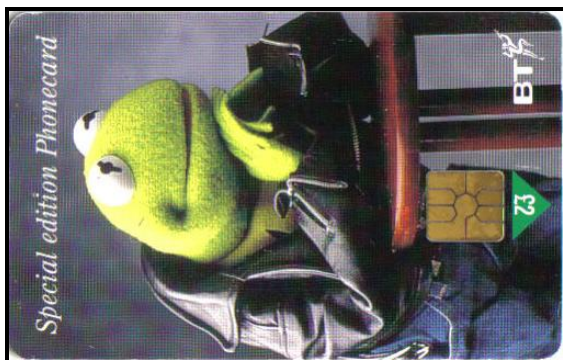
In Hout Bay in Cape Town, female Leopard Toads take their lives in their hands when crossing a major road at night to find the ideal spawning pool. The municipality has had to put up a sign warning motorists. “Danger Toad Crossing”. To raise awareness of their suicidal plight, the Cape

Point Vineyard has labelled two of its wines "Splattered Toad" and donates some of their profits to toad protection.

The greatest threat to frog and toad life is us and our use of insecticides, pollution of dams and waterways and destruction of their environment.

Frogs are also widely used in medicine, in laboratory testing of new drugs and in teaching anatomy. Our own *Platanna XENOPUS LAEVIS LAEVIS* was extensively used in pregnancy tests for humans. They have escaped into the wild in America where they have become a threat to other aquatic life in some areas.

The most famous of all frogs is probably Kermit the Muppet and his biologically improbable and unproductive fixation with a pig. Who does not get a frog in their throats when listening to his soulful rendition (in the musical sense) of " The Rainbow Connection"?



Above: (Phonecards Kermit and Miss Piggy)

Another well-known froggy song is the "Frog Song" by Paul McCartney from the animated film of the Rupert the Bear cartoons. "Arm in Arm; Hand in Hand; We'll all Stand Together".

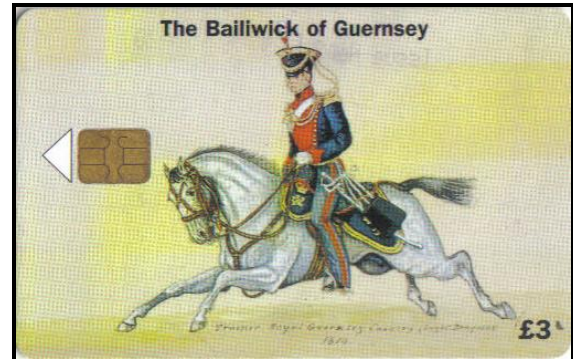
There are also many children's songs with a

froggy theme, the Irish "Frog in the well", the American "Froggy Went A'courtin'". All seem to cover the subject of marriage!

Not all frogs are aquatic creatures.

A frog could be:

An attachment suspended from a belt for supporting a sword.



or the horny substance in the middle of a horses hoof.

An ornamental catch for the front of a coat.



or a device at the intersection of a railway track or tram line, or of the overhead wires which allows the train or tram to cross from one track to another.



ED: Thank you so much Cedric for this interesting article on Frogs. I'm sure our members have a totally new perspective of "Frog" ☺.