

Blue Frogs?!

Moor frogs seem just like ordinary, everyday amphibians. Ordinarily, male moor frogs and female moor frogs are both dull brown in color. There is virtually no dimorphism in the species; males and females look, for the most part, exactly alike.



But every year during mating season, something amazing happens: adult male moor frogs change their skin color from a reddish-brown color to an azure blue. This transformation lasts for about a week.

Moor frogs live in the lowlands of central and southern Europe. Large populations of them can be found in the river valleys of southwestern Poland.

Every year, some time between March and June, the moor frogs wake up from their winter hibernation. After sleeping most of the winter, they are restless and looking for a mate.

Thousands of moor frogs gather at ponds, filling the air with their mating calls. The sound of this call is similar to the sound of air being released from a bottle under the water.

Males arrive at the pond first. They are eager to find a suitable female. The males gather in the shallow parts of the pond and begin giving their bubbly mating call. The males are more interested in finding a mate than the females are, so it takes a while for the females to show up.

But remember: moor frogs are not normally dimorphic. The males and females of the species look almost exactly alike.

So how can the eager males tell which frogs are female? They change their color to azure blue. The change is really something to see. During mating season, male moor frogs look totally different than they do for the rest of the year.

And this chameleon-like ability that male moor frogs have is not intended to attract females. Females of the species are not eager to mate, and they don't pay much attention to any particular male frog. The males change color so they can see which frogs are female and which frogs are male.

When the female moor frogs arrive at the pond, the males move around, looking for that special lady frog. When they find her, they hop towards her as fast as they can!

After mating season is over, the males turn brown again, and the females lay eggs. After a successful mating season, ponds are so thick with frogspawn that they appear muddy. And after the eggs hatch, and the tadpoles grow up into adult frogs, all of these frogs are the same reddish-brown color...until the next mating season!