

GRAB BAG

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Wild Side

Rana aurora

Northern red-legged frog

By LYNETTE RAE MCADAMS

A genuine local to the coast, the Northern red-legged frog inhabits the western regions of Northern California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia,

thriving in the forests and wetlands that relish copious amounts of rain.

A medium-sized frog, it has a slender body, smooth brown to reddish-brown skin, black mottling, a dark eye mask, and a single light stripe that runs along the jawline. The undersides of its long legs and also its belly are typically orange or tawny red in color, lending meaning to its scientific name, which translates literally as "dawn-colored frog."

Like all frogs, *Rana aurora* is an amphibian. Not quite a fish, but not really a reptile either, amphibians



A female Northern red-legged frog in the woods near Cape Disappointment, Washington.

PHOTO BY LYNETTE RAE MCADAMS

lead a double life, starting out in ponds and marshes in their larval stage as tadpoles, when they use gills to breathe underwater, then quickly growing legs and lungs to eventually emerge from the birthing pool completely transformed — walking (or in this case, jumping) onto dry land. With long, powerful legs, this is the frog you're most likely to encounter

when hiking in the Columbia-Pacific region; camouflaged against the forest floor, it can be hard to spot at first, but its tendency to leap out from underfoot at the very last second gives away its identity every time.

With permeable skin, the Northern red-legged frog never drinks water — it simply absorbs it — making it an excellent biological indicator of an ecosystem's

overall health; if the water becomes toxic, this sensitive frog can't survive. In addition to its duty in keeping the frog hydrated, this thin, specialized skin also plays a role in nutrition: shedding itself quite frequently — even up to once per week — the old, dead skin is consumed by the frog as soon as it manages to pull it off.

In addition to its own

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dermis, some of *R. aurora*'s other favorite feasts include insects, snails and slugs, worms, tadpoles and small fish. With a long, sticky tongue that attaches to the front of the mouth instead of the back, it catches its prey and then, using a single row of upper teeth to hold the meal steady, blinks once, pushing its eyeballs through the roof of the mouth, creating a bulge that helps shove the food down the frog's throat — a fitting reminder that in a Pacific Northwest forest, every day is like Thanksgiving.

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 10TH
NOON TO 4PM
LIBERTY THEATRE



Festive shopping that benefits local nonprofits

Santa Lucia Festival of Lights

Friday, November 25th
Astoria High School
1001 W. Marine Drive
Holiday Music 6:30pm
Santa Lucia Festival of Lights Program 7pm

Program

- Santa Lucia Bride & Attendants
- Star Boys
- Introduction of the 2017 Scandinavian Court
- Lighting of the Christmas tree

Featured Entertainment

- North Coast Chorale
- Astor Street Opry Company ChrisLynn Taylor & the Cast of Scrooged In Astoria
- Nordic & Viking Dancers
- **Refreshments:** United Finnish Kaleva Brothers & Sisters, Astoria Lodge #2
- **Public Dancing:** Scandinavian Music by Jorgen & Steve Phillips

Admission \$1 per individual or \$5 per family
Proceeds will go to the Festival Scholarship Fund
Sponsored by the Scandinavian Midsummer Heritage Association

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