

Bowfroggin'

By Robert S. Steenbeke

There's no more challenging way to fill a pan with chicken-fried frog legs than to hunt them with bow and arrow. Head out into those warm spring and summer nights with our author, a veteran bowfishing guide.

Throughout the centuries, people have imagined the night being ruled by evil fantasies, like werewolves, vampires and ghoulish monsters. Even when we stick with reality, some pretty gosh-awful things come out at night, like snakes, scorpions and swarms of mosquitoes. But not everything that goes bump in the night is quite so evil or bad.

For instance, frogs.

Now, I'll have to grant you that they are pretty darned ugly and even a tad slimy, but have you ever eaten a set of frog legs? Anything that tastes that good can not be all bad, and anything that is so much fun to

hunt cannot be evil, so leave the fantasies for the movie directors, prepare yourself to face the realities, and let's go bowfroggin'!

Facing realities means that before we leave for the lake, we need to recognize that there *are* things out there at night that can make our lives miserable if we let them. It's nothing to get shook up about, but certain measures must be taken beforehand to avoid any possible complications that could arise, insuring that our time on the lake will be enjoyable time.

Snakes are a number-one worry to many folks. I don't know why, because in seven years of guiding, neither I nor any of my

clients have ever been attacked by a water snake of any kind, and those that swam nearby were easily discouraged by the swat of an arrow or rod. It's better to be safe than sorry though, so anyone walking the shoreline should wear snake leggings. When wading, consider a thick pair of waders. Whether walking, wading or shooting from a boat, keep a snakebite kit handy, just in case.

Mosquitoes and other biting insects are truly a serious concern. These bugs are capable of spreading several unpleasant diseases to humans, and their bites are an unpleasant bother even when not accompa-



Waders worn while hunting frogs on foot will keep you dry and offer some protection against insects and snakes.

High power spotlights can help freeze a frog in place long enough for you to get off an accurate shot.

nied by disease. Buy and use the best-quality repellent you can find. The way to judge a repellent is by its percentage of DEET, a chemical especially effective against most biting insects. Get one with at least 25 percent DEET. Try for 50 percent DEET or more, if possible.

Since bowfrogging is mostly a nighttime affair, and is best on very dark nights, be sure to have at least two reliable light sources. If you only have one light and it hits the Fritz on you, you won't be able to see past the end of your nose. Having at least one spare light will avoid this potential problem.

The best lights for frogging are spotlights in the 35,000 to 65,000 candlepower range. A frog's eyes will glow brightly when hit by these spotlights and the yellow circle under their chins will show up well, too.

Also, when you place the beam of these fairly powerful lights directly into the frog's eyes, it seems to paralyze them. Once you are close though, do not move the beam off them for even an instant or they are usually gone before you can get it back on them. If the frogs have been hunted quite a bit, they often won't hold long even with the light right on their eyes. Carefully watch for these hunt-wise frogs to begin to sink. That is

your cue to take your shot immediately or kiss that croaker good-bye.

While looking for eyes, move the lights a lot, but slowly. Look under, over, around and through every little spot a frog could possibly be hiding. Despite the eyes and chin patch showing up well, if that frog is facing away from the light or if there is any small piece of cover between you and the frog, it's awfully easy to overlook one.

The absolute best time of year to go frogging is during the early summer breeding season, but be sure to check on open season dates with the local game and fish department.





Your regular fishing or bowfishing boat will do nicely for frogging. It will hold gear, you trophy "croakers" and refreshments.



Jorge Grillo heard this frog's mating call from over one-quarter mile away, stalked within range and reeled in his prize. Bullfrogs of this size are not unusual in Southern states.

ment before heading out. Also ask the wardens about equipment restrictions, closed areas or specie restrictions.

Knowing what species are legal and what they look like may be very important,

BOW REPORTS

GET THE FACTS! Don't guess at bow performance, specifications or characteristics. Read the bow reports prepared exclusively for Bowhunting World by archery's most respected authority, Norb Mullaney. Just check the reports you want and include \$3 for each. Send with your name and address to *Bowhunting World* Bow Reports, 319 Barry Ave. S., Wayzata, MN 55391. And see our regular issues for a complete listing.

'92 3D & Target Guide — Spring

McPherson Magna Eliminator

'92 3D & Target Guide — Spring

Martin Firecat 4000

February 1992

Alpine Rebel

December 1991

Browning Midas

October 1991

PSE Mach 6

August 1991

Golden Eagle Formula 1 Turbo

June 1991

Pro Line Match Point

April 1991

Jennings Carbon Extreme

'91 3D & Target Guide

Alpine Silverado

'91 3D & Target Guide

Pearson Spoiler Competition 296CS

'91 3D & Target Guide

Hoyt ProVantage Carbon Plus

February 1991

Darton Stinger I/T

February 1991 Special Report

Jerry Hill Wildcat

December 1990

Oneida Strike Eagle

October 1990

Martin Onza

as the order of Salientia (Frogs) is a big branch on the amphibian tree, comprised of some 2,500 species, but only one to six species in the genus *Rana* are usually legal targets.

The best nights to go frogging are those that are warm, calm and humid. This means that you must be prepared to sweat. Take cold non-alcoholic refreshments with you to the water and take time out to drink them, no matter how loud the frogs are calling you. Dehydration can quickly lead to exhaustion and most accidents happen when people are tired, so unless you're looking to let your wife collect your life insurance early, or you

enjoy the taste of lake water, take the hint and drink the drinks.

Whenever possible, I prefer to do my frogging from a boat, thus making snakes less of a concern and giving me mobility to quickly find a froggin' hotspot. Quick access to drinks, live wells, first aid and back up equipment is also nice to have. The best boat for frogging is a shallow draft, flat bottom john boat with shooting platforms, since one that you can easily get through thick vegetation is a definite advantage. I've

Lights of from 30,000 to 50,000 candle power, like those used for other kinds of nighttime bowfishing, are ideal for your frogging expeditions.





It's tough to concentrate on your quarry when snakes are numerous. Leggings like these from Rattler's Brand can ease your concerns considerably. The same manufacturer, Thomaston Mills, makes snake-proof gaiters out of fabric woven from Dupont Cordura.

had to pass up more than one frog because I couldn't get my 16-foot bass boat close enough to him, but I've never had to pass up one in my little johnny.

To find the frogs, first you listen for them. On a calm night you can hear a big bullfrog for a half mile or more. This is a frog's way of advertising for a mate and the loudest males are the ones that get the girls, so they really sound off when the weather is right. Unfortunately, the weather isn't always right.

If you don't hear any frogs, look for a large cove loaded up with lily pads or other vegetation reaching the surface of the water. This is heaven to a frog. Cruise the edge of the cove slowly, using only the trolling motor. Use the big motor only for quick transport between two far-flung hotspots on the lake, never while cruising because it makes it hard to hear frogs and scares them a little, too. Once you've spotted a frog, don't even use the trolling motor. A frog is not a large target and it will help your shooting average tremendously to get as close as possible. Pole your way to him slowly and quietly. Done carefully, on uneducated

frogs, poling will often get you within a few feet.

I prefer to do my frogging with a more or less standard bowfishing rig. I do tend to use smaller barbs than normal though, so as to destroy less meat on a poor hit. Some people use broadhead tipped arrows or stunning type points like blunts or judo points, but if you don't hit that frog just exactly perfect he will often swim off and be lost. Sometimes, a large one will even take your arrow with them. With the bowfishing rig, even a poor hit can be reeled in.

Once you've acquired a bunch of frogs, you'll have to clean them. Putting the batch on ice can delay the chore until you're better rested, but eventually it must be done. Luckily, cleaning frogs is no major ordeal. A sharp knife and needlenose pliers is all that is needed. First, cut around the body just in front of the legs. Next strip the skin off the legs with the pliers. Now, cut through the joints at the body and toes with the knife. Last, sever the tendons at each joint to finish the job and so the legs won't move during frying, which scares some cooks out of the kitchen and the appetite out of others. Either

way, it won't get you any encouragement towards your next froggin' trip.


Don't worry about cleaning the body and front legs of a small frog. There is so little meat there that it really is counterproductive to even try to clean them, but do skin out and save the front legs of larger frogs. There is even enough meat on the backstraps of very large frogs to make that worth keeping, too. With a little practice, the whole cleaning job can be done in about a minute per small frog, two or three on a large one.

Cooking frog legs and meat is very easy. Just use your favorite recipe for chicken and you'll do fine. Frog even tastes a lot like a chicken thigh.

Not only is frogging a lot of fun and the star of one heck of a great meal, but it is also a way to keep your shooting eye in shape for other bow sports during the year, thus killing three birds with one stone, so to speak. So, why not break out the old bent stick and stringed arrows, limber up the arms and head for the lake the very next warm, calm summer night? I can hear those frogs a-call-in' you!

SHURE SHOT

World's Finest Fish Points



WON WITH SHURE SHOT:

- 10 STATE TITLES
- NUMEROUS TOURNAMENTS
- 7 STATE RECORD FISH



Shure Shot points have a unique one piece rotating barb. A quick turn of the shaft allows the barb to rotate for easy removal.

We guarantee our fish points and barbs against breakage.

5/16" fiberglass arrow with nock and point \$5.85. Shure Shot fish point \$3.50. \$2.50 shipping all orders.

Send check or money order to:

15-Day Moneyback Guarantee

SHURE SHOT

P.O. BOX 748, STEVENS POINT, WI 54461
(715) 341-1028 Dealer Inquiries Invited