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The Gopher Frog



The Gopher Frog

Tara was dreaming of swinging in a bamboo swing when she caught a whiff of something burning. It turned out to be her neighbors, who were burning piles of dry leaves. The scent of smoke reminded Tara of forest fires and the destruction they can cause. However, she also remembered reading somewhere that forest fires can be beneficial for certain types of habitats, such as the pine grasslands that are home to gopher frogs and tortoises. When these areas are burned

Hi!
I am Tara



periodically, it helps maintain the habitat by keeping the canopy clear and getting rid of vegetation in the ponds, which supports large populations of burrowing animals like the gopher frog. Tara likened this process to getting rid of garbage by burning it.

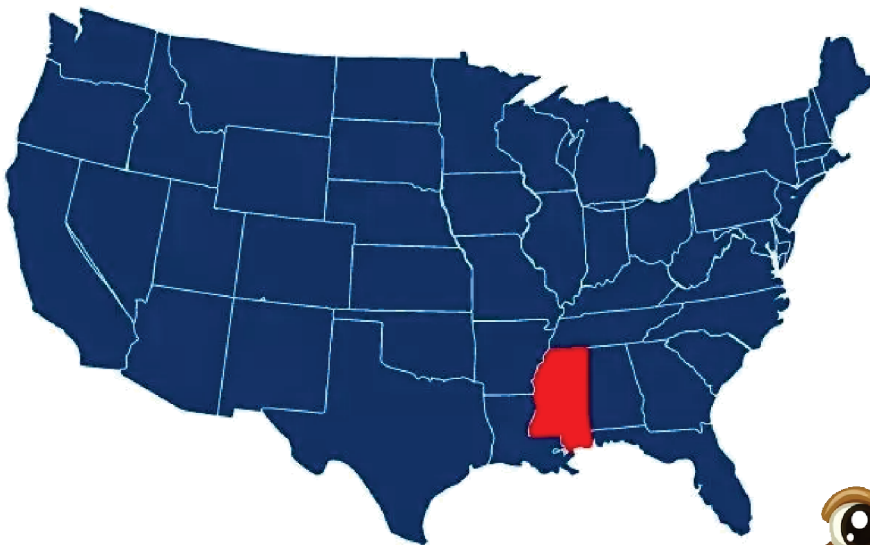
Curious to learn more about gopher frogs, Tara decided to do some research. She discovered that this tiny, three-inch long frog is one of the 100 most endangered species on the planet and is only found in pine grasslands in Mississippi. The gopher frog is known for its loud, rumbling call, which is similar to a human snore. It also secretes poison to escape predators and can lift its front legs to cover its eyes. Gopher frogs hide from the sun for most of their lives and find shelter in burned-out tree stumps resulting from natural fires.



Unfortunately, climate change and development are threatening the gopher frog's habitat. Unpredictable rain and drought patterns caused by climate change are changing the habitat, making it unsuitable for gopher frogs. The ponds where they breed are drying up, and development like roads and the timber industry are destroying



their habitat even further. As of 2015, only around 135 dusky gopher frogs were estimated to remain in the wild, mostly at a single pond in Mississippi.



Tara finished reading about the gopher frog with a sigh.

She had already noticed that there were hardly any frogs in her area, and she remembered her mother telling her that when she was a child, frogs would croak to indicate rain. Tara realized that the disappearance of frogs was not just an ecological tragedy but also a sign of a changing climate.



New Words

1. **Whiff**- scent

2. **Dusky**- dark in colour

3. **Rumbling**- to make a deep heavy sound

Find other new and interesting words for each other, and write their meanings in your notebooks.

Comprehension

1. What evidence suggests that frogs are indicators of weather?
2. Who was burning the leaves that created the smell?
3. What memory did the scent of burning leaves trigger for Tara?
4. What type of call does the gopher frog make?
5. Where does the gopher frog take shelter to avoid the sun?
6. In which region of the United States is the gopher frog typically found?

Take turns to make more questions like these above for each other and answer them.

Prompts Pair up

1. Discuss with your partner how fires can help maintain the habitat of the gopher frog. Write down in your notebooks.
2. Have you ever observed frogs in your local environment? If so, when and where? If not, what factors might contribute to their absence?
3. **Frog Communication Game:**
 - a. Play a game where one person is the gopher frog and the other person is a predator.
 - b. Discuss the importance of frog communication and how it helps them survive in their habitat.
4. **Gopher Frog Charades:**

Take turns acting out the behaviors and movements of a gopher frog, such as hopping, snoring, and covering its eyes with its legs. The other partner must guess the behavior and explain how it relates to the gopher frog's survival in the wild.

Watch the video
on the
Gopher Frog
using the
QR code.



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DEVI Sansthan: Dignity, Education, Vision International
10 Station Road, Lucknow 226001, UP, INDIA