

## First-Time Herping, Big-Time Mess

**Bringing home a cluster of tadpoles can be dangerous if you don't plan in advance.**

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This can make quite the mess! I was one of those fortunate kids with a family that supported my love of animals. There was, however, a limit. I pushed it often, and more often than not I found myself in trouble for my efforts.

At 7 years old I was determined to raise frogs in the house. My mother was determined that I not. We had a large, natural pond in the front yard packed with every young herp-lovers dream: ample leopard frogs, a couple red-eared sliders and various snakes. Each day I went down to forage for potential pets. Each day my mother blocked me at the front door.

Frogs belong in the pond, she told me. They need water. This was all the information I needed.

I waited for the precise moment she left the front room to cook dinner, and then I hustled back down to the pond with a large fishbowl. I waded in up to my knees, held the vessel out in front of me and scooped like a fish trawler. Being completely ignorant of water quality, crowding and other such petty constraints, I crammed as many tadpoles as I could into that 2.5-gallon bowl. By the time I'd finished there had to be at least 50 squirming inhabitants in my proposed "habitat."

With part one of the plan settled, it was time for the hard part. Getting my new charges into the house without tripping any maternal alarms would only be possible through the front door if I moved very quietly. If lucky, my mother would remain in the kitchen, her attention on the stove rather than the idiot smuggling slippery contraband into the back room.

As it so happened, I made it through the door without a hitch. She was busy over a pot of spaghetti sauce and did not even hear the hinges creak. The mission was going just swimmingly... until I tripped. My feet snagged the rug, my body lurched forward and somewhere around 50 tadpoles spurted from safety of their bowl onto the inhospitable rug below.

My squawk of alarm alerted Mom to the carnage. She raced from the kitchen, took one look at me –soaking wet and stinky after rooting around in the pond –and then looked down at the wriggling catastrophe peppering the carpet. A finger pointed in my direction.

"Room. Now," she bit out before issuing another mandate. "I don't want to see you for at least an hour."

I scrambled for cover and left her to deal with the results of my poor planning. Since then I've come a long way in providing for the comfort of my pets. I make sure to not only do my research first, but also to set up the appropriate habitat before bringing a new animal home. I can't say I'm any more coordinated, but I do set everything up in advance before bumbling my way through the front door.

Have a herping adventure of your own to share? Click on the "Submit a Comment" button below.

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