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The Frog Scientist (Scientists In The Field Series)



Synopsis

The critically acclaimed Scientist in the Field book about how one boy's interest in backyard science inspired a career in scientific discovery. When Tyrone Hayes was growing up in South Carolina, he didn't worry about pesticides. He just liked to collect frogs. Tyrone's interest in science led him to Harvard University, and though he struggled at first, he found his calling in the research lab of an amphibian scientist. Meanwhile, scientists discovered that all around the globe, frogs were dying. The decline has many causes, including habitat loss and disease. Tyrone discovered that the most commonly used pesticide in the United States, atrazine, may also play a role. Tyrone tested atrazine on frogs in his lab at Berkeley. He found that the chemical caused some of the male frogs to develop into bizarre half-male, half-female frogs. What was going on? That's what Tyrone wants to find out.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

Meet Dr. Tyrone Hayes, frog scientist extraordinaire. The author opens the book by taking us along on a field trip with Dr. Hayes and his graduate students as they collect leopard frogs from a Wyoming pond. Dr. Hayes will take the frogs back to his Berkeley lab to study how the commonly used pesticide atrazine affects their development. It feels like you're with the group at the pond in

the cool morning air, splashing through water, squelching through mud, brushing clouds of mayflies from your face, and trying to wrangle the wily hoppers with big nets. The second chapter flashes back in time to show us how a tough little African-American kid who grew up in a segregated south loved reptiles and amphibians so much that he ended up graduating from Harvard and UC Berkeley. That was 1989, the very year that scientists discovered that frogs were dying at an alarming rate around the world. Fast forward to the future, when Dr. Hayes goes to work for the chemical company that makes atrazine. The firm wanted him to test the pesticide on frogs. But they didn't like what he found. Tiny amounts of the chemical "feminized" male frogs; they produced eggs in their testes rather than sperm! Obviously, they could not father future frogs. No wonder American frogs were dying out. But the company wouldn't allow Dr. Hayes to publish his findings, so he left to pursue his studies elsewhere. The author skillfully takes the reader through the experiment that Dr. Hayes designed to test his hypothesis that atrazine causes feminized male frogs. Her writing is clear and concise, and she makes complex scientific concepts easy to understand and accessible to young readers. Profiles of Dr. Hayes' young lab assistants at work brighten the lively writing.

Tyrone was the type of boy who always had his toes in the waters of Colombia, South Carolina. He lived near "a swamp full of frogs, snapping turtles, and snakes," and to this day he's still dipping in water looking for frogs. If you want to catch them, you have to get up at the crack of dawn and get moving. Field biology isn't for people who want to sleep until noon and Dr. Tyrone Hayes isn't about to lie in bed when he has a mission to do. In particular he is running experiments to see if the pesticide atrazine affects the development of frogs. He noticed that "atrazine feminized male leopard frogs." Around the world certain types of frogs have become extinct and many appear to be following in their footsteps. There are a few obvious reasons why frogs are disappearing such as the fact that forests are being cut down and wetlands are being filled up with soil and built upon. Things like global warming have encouraged the spread of the chytrid fungus which is rapidly killing them off, but the unseen factors such as the introduction of atrazine to fresh water sources are why has Dr. Hayes working at a breakneck pace in his laboratory. In this book you'll learn even more reasons why frogs are dying off, you'll get to see and learn about why there are so many deformities, why Hotel Campresre became a "frog hotel," you'll learn about "bizarre half-male, half-female" frogs, and more! This is a fascinating story about an unusual scientist at work that will mesmerize even the most reluctant reader. I particularly liked the way the story draws the reader in right from the start in Dugway Pond and brings him or her right through an actual experiment in the Hayes Lab. The book does make it clear without saying that "environmental health and human

health are one and the same.

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