

SHORT COMMUNICATION

**THE FROG THAT WEARS A MASK ON ITS BOTTOM !**

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With its hind legs folded, the tiny red narrow-headed frog (*Micrhylla rubrum*) of Sri Lanka and India, which reaches a snout-vent length of 30 mm, may appear harmless to larger animals. Its bright pinkish-red dorsal body colouration is, however, something to think twice about, for bright colours in the animal kingdom, is either aposematic (warning colouration) or involved in reproduction (either in the recognition of species or of reproductive condition). Bright colours advertise something very often found in such small, comparatively slow moving terrestrial frogs that are preoccupied in searching for prey (also called "widely foraging predators"): powerful toxins or noxious tissue, which make them completely inedible, sometimes resulting in death or damage to predators foolish enough to ignore the warning. At the turn of the century, the Indian biologist C. R. N. Rao reported that the tadpoles of the red narrow-headed frog produces an acidic secretion from a gland on the forehead, which made them unpalatable to dogs in an experiment.

bright colours failed to scare, or if the predator cannot perceive colours, our little frog spreads the hind limbs, revealing a perfect face, patterned in black above the vent, comprising a pair of eyes and nostrils and a mouth.

Eye-spots are to be seen in a larger number of unrelated animals, including butterflies and moths, as well as their caterpillars, fish, lizards, turtles, snakes and birds, and it has been contended that these marks do not necessarily mimic any potentially dangerous animal. The sudden appearance of large, staring eyes are thought enough to startle the enemy out of its wits!