

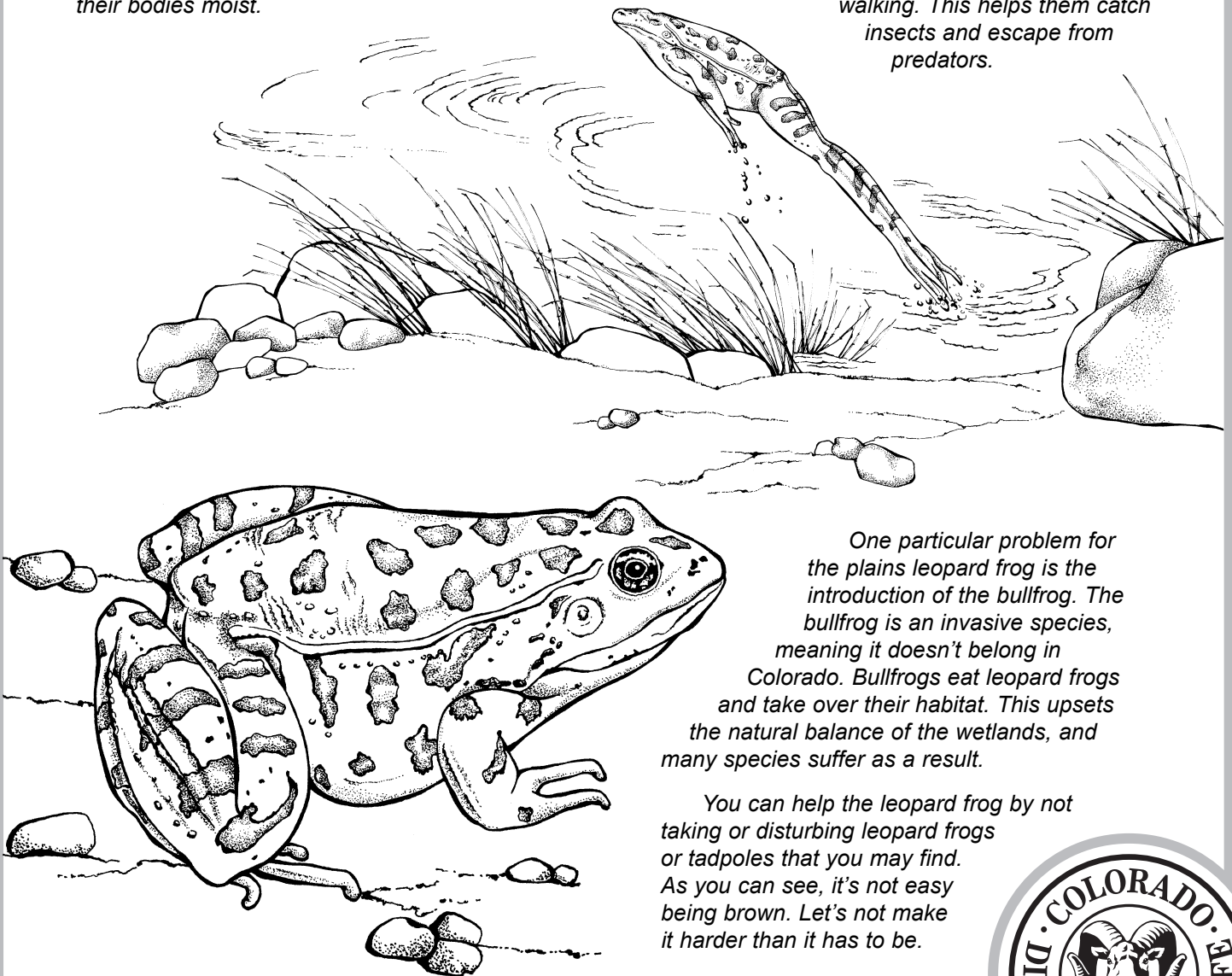
If You're Hoppy and You Know It...

A long time ago, Kermit the Frog once told us "it's not easy bein' green." That may be so, but it's even harder being brown like the plains leopard frog of southeastern Colorado. When everything from garter snakes to invasive bullfrogs thinks you'd make a tasty lunch, you'd agree that it's a hard life.

Roughly four inches long, the plains leopard frog spends most of its time near water. Frogs are "amphibians," meaning they live on both land and water during their life cycles. For their food, air, and travel needs, they come onto land. They use ponds or lakes for breeding and to keep their bodies moist.

Frogs don't drink water, they absorb the water they need through their skin. Amphibians like these were around before the dinosaurs!

Female leopard frogs lay their eggs in the water and can produce between 4,000–6,500 eggs in one batch. A lot of these eggs will never hatch because fish eat them. During the mid-summer, the surviving eggs hatch and become hundreds or thousands of tadpoles. Many tadpoles will also be eaten by fish. The lucky ones that survive grow their legs and become adults. Their powerful legs allow them to jump very well. In fact, frog's legs are better designed for jumping than walking. This helps them catch insects and escape from predators.



One particular problem for the plains leopard frog is the introduction of the bullfrog. The bullfrog is an invasive species, meaning it doesn't belong in Colorado. Bullfrogs eat leopard frogs and take over their habitat. This upsets the natural balance of the wetlands, and many species suffer as a result.

You can help the leopard frog by not taking or disturbing leopard frogs or tadpoles that you may find. As you can see, it's not easy being brown. Let's not make it harder than it has to be.

