



## **Blanchard's Cricket Frog (*Acris blanchardi*)**

*A-chris blan-churd-ee*



*\*Sam Fellows*



*\*Mike Day*

**Description:** Blanchard's cricket frogs are a very small hylid frog between ½ and 1 ½ inches in size. The skin is moist and warty, and ground color can range from light to dark brown, tan, yellowish, grayish, to olive green. In most specimens, there is a green to sometimes reddish or reddish orange triangular shaped marking on the dorsum. There may also be a wide, dark ocular and lateral stripes present as well. Toe pads are present, but poorly defined.

### **Taxonomy and Classification:**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Anura

**Suborder:** Neobatrachia

**Family:** Hylidae

**Genus:** *Acris*

**Species:** *Acris blanchardi*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

**Similar/Confusing Species:** Spring Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) usually have a large, imperfect "X" pattern on their dorsum and lack warty skin. Chorus frogs (*Pseudacris maculata* and *Pseudacris*

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*triseriata*) also lack warty skin and usually have several light and dark colored, broken longitudinal stripes. Eastern and Cope's Gray Treefrogs (*Hyla/Dryophytes versicolor* and *Hyla/Dryophytes chrysoscelis*) are usually larger than cricket frogs, have larger, more well developed toe pads, and a distinct yellowish-orange groinal region. For tadpole/larvae identification, see the following link below: <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/pdf/level1/wepp/TadpoleLarvalSalamanderKeys.pdf>

**Etymology:** *Acris*-skris (locust, or grasshopper). *blanchardi*- a patronym honoring Frank N. Blanchard (1888-1937), herpetologist at the University of Michigan.

**Sounds/Call:** The anurans are perhaps the most audible and vocal of the herptile groups. The Blanchard's cricket frog's call is a short, rapid sounding "kek-kek-kek" like two marbles hitting one another. Cricket frogs may also produce other sounds/vocalizations (such as distress, territorial, or rivalry calls), but some rustling and/or plopping into water may also be heard.

**Subspecies:** None.

**Range & Habitat:** Formerly abundant over most of southern and central Wisconsin, this species is now only found in isolated localities of southwestern Wisconsin. Prefers open to semi open, permanent to semi-permanent wetland shorelines of ponds, lakes, marshes, rivers, and streams.

**Habits & Natural History:** The Blanchard's cricket frog was formerly a subspecies of the Northern cricket frog, which is a common to abundant frog over much of its range in eastern North America. In Wisconsin, however, populations of this frog have declined substantially due to the introduction of pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals into the environment, as well as habitat loss and degradation. Beginning in late March to early April, these frogs emerge from hibernation, and begin calling shortly thereafter from late April or May through Mid-July. The call resembles a rapid, high pitched clicking together of pebbles or marbles. Following the breeding season, cricket frogs tend to disperse only short distances and occupy semi moist habitats nearby. Cricket frogs feed on tiny insects, arthropods, and isopods. They will occasionally climb into low vegetation, but their weakly defined toe pads do not suit them for a strongly arboreal lifestyle such as that of true hylid frogs.

**Phenology:** Blanchard's cricket frogs emerge from overwintering as early as the first warm days of mid to late March or April, and begin calling from early to mid-May through mid July. They will remain active throughout the rest of the year through late September or October (or sometimes even later in the year if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit).

**Conservation Status:** WI State Endangered, regulated by the WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC), but in need of updating.

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area

<http://www.madisonherps.org>

Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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