



Eastern Gray Treefrog (*Hyla/Dryophytes versicolor*)
Cope's Gray Treefrog (*Hyla/Dryophytes chrysoscelis*)

Hi-la cry-sos-sell-ease

Hi-la verse-e-color





Description: Both species of gray treefrogs are fairly small to medium sized hylid frogs with large and distinct toe pads used for climbing and somewhat moist, warty skin. Color can be quite variable, ranging from gray, greenish-gray, brown, greenish brown, tan, to lime green. There may also be darker, irregular markings on the dorsum and limbs, which may be faded, indistinct, or absent on some specimens. The distinct thigh and groin regions are also yellow to orange-yellow. Unfortunately, there are no reliable methods for visually distinguishing these two species.

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: *Hyla*/*Dryophytes*

Species: *Hyla/Dryophytes versicolor** and *Hyla/Dryophytes chrysoscelis**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Similar/Confusing Species: Spring Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) are smaller, have less well developed toe pads, and have a large, imperfect "X" pattern on their dorsum. Chorus Frogs (*Pseudacris maculata* and *Pseudacris triseriata*) are also smaller, have less well developed toe pads, and several irregular, or broken longitudinal stripes. Blanchard's cricket frogs (*Acris blanchardi*) also tend to be smaller, have less well developed toe pads, have wartier skin, and a greenish to reddish or reddish-orange triangular shaped marking on the dorsum. For tadpole/larvae identification, see the following link below:

<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/pdf/level1/wepp/TadpoleLarvalSalamanderKeys.pdf>

Etymology: *Hyla*-(In honor of Hylas, a companion of Hercules). *versicolor*-versi (various and color) color

<http://www.madisonherps.org>

(color). chrysoscelis-chryso (gold) kelis (spot or stain).

Sounds/Call: The anurans are perhaps the most audible and vocal of the herptile groups. The Eastern gray treefrog's call is a long, melodic bird-like trill. The Cope's gray treefrog's call is a shorter, harsher, nasal or insect sounding trill. Both Cope's and Eastern gray treefrogs 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: Collectively, both species occur statewide. The Eastern gray treefrog is more of a forest, woodlot, and woodland dwelling species, being found throughout the state in suitable forested wetland habitats. The Cope's gray treefrog has a more scattered distribution in Wisconsin, but it favors more open prairie, oak savannah, and suburban areas of southern Wisconsin.

Habits & Natural History: Both gray treefrog species are highly arboreal frogs, using their enlarged toe pads to climb, often occupying trees, shrubs, and rock faces. The two species that occur in Wisconsin (Eastern gray treefrog and the Cope's gray treefrog) are difficult to visually distinguish, with the only reliable methods being differences in the male's call (described above) and number of chromosomes. The eastern gray treefrog is a tetraploid, while the Cope's is a diploid. These frogs begin calling from mid to late spring, or late April to early June, and can often be seen on and around windows and lights during summer nights.

Phenology: Eastern and Cope's gray treefrogs emerge from overwintering as early as the first warm days of mid to late April or May and begin calling from early to mid-May through June. 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 Both are Common, with no special protections, but are regulated by the WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

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 Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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