



Pickerel Frog (*Lithobates/Rana palustris*)

Litho-bait-ees pal-lust-tris



Description: The pickerel frog is a medium sized, semi aquatic ranid frog ranging in size from 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 3 inches. Background color can range from light to dark brown or grayish brown, with (oftentimes) four well defined linear rows of darker square to rectangular blotches along the dorsum and dorso lateral. The hind limbs are heavily marked with dark cross bands, and distinct, light colored dorsolateral folds are usually present. The thigh and groin region also tends to be yellow as well. These features distinguish the pickerel frog from the northern leopard frog (*Lithobates/Rana pipiens*), with which it is often confused with.

Taxonomy and Classification:

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Suborder: Neobatrachia

Family: Ranidae

Genus: Rana/Lithobates

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Species: *Rana/Lithobates palustris**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Similar/Confusing Species: Northern leopard frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*) have more rounded to oval shaped, irregularly shaped and oriented blotches on the dorsum, lack the yellow groinal regions, and may have a more green to greenish-brown ground color than pickerel frogs. For tadpole/larvae identification, see the following link below:

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

Etymology: Lithobates- Litho (stone) bates (one that walks, treads, hunts). palustris-marshy or swampy). “Rana” latin for “frog”.

Sounds/Call: The anurans are perhaps the most audible and vocal of the herptile groups. The pickerel frog’s call sounds like a low, harsh snore, which may be difficult to hear over other frog species. Pickerel 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: Pickerel frogs probably occur throughout most of the state in suitable habitat, but are localized. These frogs are usually found in, and are associated with higher quality intact wetlands including prairie potholes, springs, streams, rivers, ponds, and sometimes marshes.

Habits & Natural History: Pickerel frogs are a small to medium sized, semi aquatic ranid frog most commonly associated with higher quality wetlands. When handled or frightened, pickerel frogs may secrete an irritating, toxic skin secretion to avoid predation. These secretions are distasteful to many predators, and can adversely affect other frog species if maintained in close confinement. Pickerel frogs are typically active beginning in late March to early April, and call and reproduce from that time to about mid-June before dispersing.

Phenology: Pickerel frogs emerge from overwintering as early as the first warm days of late March to early April, and begin calling from late March through May. 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 Special Concern, 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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