



Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*)

Sood-ache-chris crew-sif-er



Description: Spring peepers are a very small hylid frog, ranging from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inches in size. Background color of these frogs can be variable, and ranges from light to dark brown, tan, yellowish, to reddish, usually with a darker irregular or imperfect “X” shaped marking on the dorsum. Faint cross banding may also be present on the hind limbs. 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: *Pseudacris*

Species: *Pseudacris crucifer**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Similar/Confusing Species: Chorus frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata-maculata*) lack a large, imperfect “X” on their dorsum, and usually have several broken, irregular dorsal stripes instead. Blanchard’s cricket frogs

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(*Acris blanchardi*) have wartier skin, and a greenish to reddish or reddish-orange triangular marking on their dorsum. Eastern and Cope's gray treefrogs (*Hyla/Dryophytes versicolor* and *Hyla/Dryophytes chrysoscelis*) are larger, have somewhat wartier skin, more well defined toe pads, and less of a distinctive "X" pattern on their dorsums. Wood frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) are larger, have dorsolateral ridges, absent toe pads, and a well-defined dark mask. For tadpole/larvae identification, see the following link below:

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

Etymology: Pseudacris-Pseudos (lie) akris (locust). crucifer-crusis (cross); ifer (bearer).

Sounds/Call: The anurans are perhaps the most audible and vocal of the herptile groups. The spring peeper's call is a high pitched "peep-peep", oftentimes in large choruses. Also sometimes a rattling "peep". Spring peepers 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: Spring peepers range throughout most of the state in suitable habitat. Typically a woodland and forest dwelling species, spring peepers are found in and around temporary wetlands (such as ephemeral ponds and ditches) within lowland to mixed forests and woodlots.

Habits & Natural History: Spring peepers are among the earliest anuran species to begin calling in early spring, often emerging and calling from mid to late March through May. In many cases, large choruses of spring peepers can be very loud and deafening, as they call from vegetation and debris in and around their temporary breeding wetlands. Following calling, these tiny frogs disperse into nearby areas where they feed on tiny insects, arthropods, and isopods. As with several other species of frogs, overwintering spring peepers are able to withstand freezing temperatures by having concentrated sugars preventing cells from rupturing, thereby acting as a natural antifreeze.

Phenology: Spring peepers are among the earliest frogs to emerge and begin calling. They emerge from overwintering as early as the first warm days of mid 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 Common with no special protections, but 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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