



Wood Frog (*Lithobates/Rana sylvaticus*)

Litho-bait-ees syl-vat-ick-iss



Description: Wood frogs are a small to medium sized semi aquatic ranid frog ranging from 1 ½ to 3 inches. They can be quite variable in color, ranging from gray, tan, brown, pinkish, yellowish, reddish orange, to black. There is always a characteristic dark stripe or “robber’s mask” over each eye, as well as a narrow, pale colored labial stripe. Dorsolateral folds are present, and the hind limbs often are faintly marked with cross banding. Some specimens also have an additional light colored dorsal stripe as well.

Taxonomy and Classification:

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Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Suborder: Neobatrachia

Family: Ranidae

Genus: Lithobates/Rana

Species: *Rana/Lithobates sylvaticus**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Similar/Confusing Species: Chorus frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata-maculata*) have weakly defined toe pads, are smaller than adult wood frogs, and have several rows of broken longitudinal dorsal stripes. Spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) also have weakly defined toe pads, and a large, imperfect “X” pattern on their dorsums. 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). *sylvaticus*-admidst the trees. Rana-Latin for “frog”.

Sounds/Call: The anurans are perhaps the most audible and vocal of the herptile groups. The wood frog’s call sounds similar to duck-like quacking, or a low chuckling. Wood 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: Generally occurs throughout most of the state except the extreme southwestern savannah region. Wood frogs are primarily a forest and woodland species, being found in moist hardwood to mixed forests and woodlots with temporary ephemeral ponds and wetlands used for breeding.

Habits & Natural History: Wood frogs are a small, semi aquatic ranid frog species that are primarily a woodland and forest dwelling species. They begin calling and breeding in shallow, temporary, ephemeral ponds and wetlands within these habitats from mid to late March and April before dispersing into the surrounding habitat to feed on small insects, arthropods, and isopods. As with several other species of frogs, overwintering wood frogs are able to withstand freezing temperatures by having concentrated sugars preventing cells from rupturing, thereby acting as a natural antifreeze.

Phenology: Wood frogs are perhaps the earliest ranid frogs to emerge and begin calling. They emerge from overwintering as early as the first warm days of late March to early April, and begin calling from

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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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