Common Tennessee Amphibians
WFS 340

Order Anura

Frogs and Toads

American toad
*Bufo americanus*

**Defining characteristics**
- Medium to large toad (5.1-9.0 cm)
- Dorsum gray, brown, olive, or brick red in color
- Light middorsal stripe (not always present)
- Chest usually spotted with dark pigment
- Warts may vary from yellow, orange, red or dark brown
- Palatine and cranial crests between the eyes are prominent
- Palatal impressions separated by ridge in lower jaw
- 1-2 warts per dark spot
- 2 tympanal bullae
- Males have dark throat patches

**Call**
- Long high musical trill
- 6-30 seconds in length
- Trill 20-40 per second
Fowler’s toad
*Bufo fowleri*

**Defining characteristics**
- Medium in size (5.1–7.5 cm)
- Coloration is gray, brown, greenish or brick red
- Light middorsal stripe
- Chest and belly unpigmented (usually)
- Parotoid and cranial crests between the eyes are prominent
- Parotoid touches postorbital ridge
- > 3 warts per dark spot
- Males have dark throat patches

**Call**
- Short blast
- Nasal *w-a-a-a-a-h*
- 1–4 seconds in length

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Northern cricket frog
*Acris crepitans*

**Defining characteristics**
- Small in size (1.6–3.5 cm)
- Coloration is tan to brown
- Bumpy skin
- Dark triangle between eyes
- Nobbing grooves and a jagged score mark: “Dorsal Racing Stripe”
- Patch of green, red, yellow or deep brown in the Y
- Rear feet fully webbed (1/2 up longest toe)—Southern (very little webbing)

**Call**
- Sounds like pebbles (marbles) being tapped together
- Starts slowly in tempo—fast—then slow (Geiger counter)
- 20–30 beats in length

*NOTE: Northern cricket frog has a more steady “tapping” call (only in SW TN)*

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Gray treefrog
*Hyla versicolor*

**Defining characteristics**
- Small frog (3.2–5.1 cm)
- Coloration normally gray or green (variable)
- Distinctive “lichen-like” coloration
- Light spot beneath eye
- Concealed surfaces of hind legs bright orange or yellow mottled with black—“Flash Colors”
- Skin slightly warty
- Toes are rounded adhesive discs—rear feet partially webbed

**Call**
- Slow vibrating high-pitch trill
- 17–35 pulses per second in length
Green treefrog  
*Hyla cinerea*

**Defining characteristics**
- Size: 2.5 – 6 cm
- Greenish skin
- **Call**
  - Short nasal “quonk”
  - Sounds like a “bicycle horn”

Photo credit: J.D. Willson and Michael Dorcas

Spring Peeper  
*Psuedacris crucifer*

**Defining characteristics**
- Small in size: (1.9 – 3.2 cm)
- Coloration includes shades of yellow, brown, gray or olive
- Belly is light and unmarked
- Dark line connects the eyes
- Dark triangle on back is an X (generally imperfect in form)
- Toe discs small
- Feet slightly webbed: no webbing between the toes
- Males have black vocal pouch and are smaller than females
- **Call**
  - A high peep-like sound
  - 1/2 second in length

Photo credit: J.D. Willson and Michael Dorcas

Southeastern chorus frog  
*Psuedacris feriarum*

**Defining characteristics**
- Small in size: (1.9 – 3.5 cm)
- Coloration normally brown or gray
- Light line along upper lip
- Dark stripe from snout to groin passes through eye
- 3 thin dark stripes often broken along the back
- A dark triangle between the eyes
- Small expanded toe pads on toes
- Missing last two or three toes
- **Call**
  - Repeated creak or prreeep
  - Sounds like running your fingers across a comb

Photo credit: Michael Dorcas and J.D. Willson
Mountain chorus frog
*Psuedacris brachyphona*

**Defining characteristics**
- Small in size (2.5-3.8 cm)
- Dark line through eye giving a “dark mask” appearance
- Stripes of back form backward parenthesis
- Small expanded toe pads on toes
- Webbing lacking between toes

**Call**
- Repeated creak or preep
- Sounds like running your fingers across a comb but much louder than SE Chorus

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Eastern narrowmouth toad
*Gastrophryne carolinensis*

**Defining characteristics**
- Small in size (2.2-3.2 cm)
- Coloration varies between gray, brown or reddish
- Pointed narrow mouth
- Fold of skin across back of head
- Short limbs
- Broad dorsal area with lighter stripes along the sides
- Stripes are usually broken or mottled
- Round eyes
- No webbing between the toes
- Males have black throat where vocal patch is located

**Call**
- Like the bleat of a lamb
- Vibrant quality like a buzzer
- 1/2-4 seconds in length

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Eastern spadefoot
*Scaphiopus holbrookii*

**Defining characteristics**
- Medium in size (4.4-5.7 cm)
- Coloration brown, grayish or blackish brown
- Vertical pupil
- Sharp-edged spade on foot
- 2 yellowish lines beginning from the eye and leading down the back form a sort of outline of an hourglass shape along the back
- Belly white and unmarked
- Species has a very musty peppery smell

**Call**
- Low grunt, rough and cough like
- Described like the call of a young crow—“errrgh”
- Short in duration and repeated at brief intervals
American Bullfrog
*Rana catesbeiana*

**Defining characteristics**
- Large frog (9-15.2 cm)
- Coloration: green or pattern of gray or brown with green background
- Belly white mottled with gray and a yellowish color on throat (especially in males)
- Large tympanum
- Distinct black bars on dorsal surface of thighs and lower legs
- Rear feet highly webbed, front feet are not
- No dorsolateral ridges on trunk
- Tail of both sexes around same size, does not extend down back
- In Bullfrogs and Green Frogs can identify if male or female by the size of the tympanum
  - Tympanum same size of eye = Female
  - Tympanum larger than the eye = Male
- Breeding males have the base of the thumb enlarged and forearms are swollen.

**Call**
- Loud bass calls
  - "jug-o-rum"

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Green Frog
*Rana clamitans*

**Defining characteristics**
- Medium in size (5.7-9.0 cm)
- Coloration ranging from green, greenish brown, dark brown
- Belly is white with dark mottling
- Male has a yellow throat (males), light gray to white
- Large tympanum
- Center of tympanum raised
- Dorsolateral ridge ends on body
- Top of thighs and legs are not highly barred

**Call**
- Sounds like the plucking of a loose banjo string
- Call loud and explosive
- Repeated once or several times

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Pickerel Frog
*Rana palustris*

**Defining characteristics**
- Medium in size (4.4-7.5 cm)
- Coloration ranging from olive green to brownish
- Cream colored dorsolateral ridges that extend from behind the eye to the groin
- Light yellow or orange on undersurface of legs
- Bright yellow or orange on undersurface of legs
- Light line along upper jaw

**Call**
- Steady low-pitched snore
  - "yeeoooow"
- 1-2 seconds in length

*Similar to gopher frog: gopher is lower pitched*
Southern leopard frog  
*Rana sphenocephala*

**Descriptive characteristics**
- Medium in size (5.1-9.0 cm)
- Coloration ranging from brown to green
- 3-2 rows of uniformly placed spots in between dorsolateral ridges
- Spots rounded with light borders
- Few additional dark spots on sides of body
- White spot in center of tympanum
- Light line on upper jaw
- Long pointed head
- Male vocal sacs lie on side of jaw spherical in shape when inflated

**Call**
- *Short chuck* like call
- Pulse rate of 13 seconds
- Sounds like *rubbing your hand on a balloon*

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Wood frog  
*Rana sylvatica*

**Descriptive characteristics**
- A small frog (3-5.5 cm)
- Generally solid tan in color
- Dark mask behind eye with white lip

**Call**
- *Mallard “food chuckle”*

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Citations and Helpful Websites

- Identification information
  - Dodd, C. K., Jr., 2004. The amphibians of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

- Pictures
  - USGS- Checklist of amphibian species and identification guide  
  - Frog and Toads of North Carolina  

- Pictures and Sounds
  - LEAPS-Environmental Consulting  
    [http://www.leaps.md/](http://www.leaps.md/)