

Visual and Aural Identification Tips For Tennessee's Frogs and Toads

Here are some identification tips for Tennessee's Frogs and Toads. Visual and aural cues shown are not intended to be comprehensive. Only the most prominent field marks are discussed. For identification in the field consult a field guide such as the Peterson Field Guide for Reptiles and Amphibians for a more complete discussion of characteristics. For the purposes of this sheet, the following broad size categories are used (size is measured from snout to vent in inches:)

Large - Over 3-1/2 inches
Medium - 2 - 3-1/2 inches
Small - 1 - 2 inches
Very Small - Less than 1 inch

Keep in mind that sizes are approximate and apply to adult sizes only. There is much variation within each species.

American Toad

Anaxyrus americanus

Visual: Medium size
Dry warty skin
Parotoid glands present
1 - 2 warts per dark spot

Aural: Call is a long high trill

Fowler's Toad

Anaxyrus fowleri

Visual: Medium size
Dry warty skin
Parotoid glands present
3 or more warts per dark spot

Aural: Short and raspy call
Sounds like a baby crying

Eastern Cricket Frog

Acris crepitans

Visual: Very small size
Dark triangle between eyes
Dorsal stripe sometimes present
Webbing on rear foot extends at least half the length of the longest toe.

Aural: Call sounds like two pebbles being tapped together. The tapping starts out slow, then accelerates, then slows back down.

Southern Cricket Frog

Acris gryllus

Visual: Very small size
Dark triangle between eyes
Dorsal stripe sometimes present
Webbing on rear foot extends less than half the length of the longest toe.

Aural: Call sounds like two pebbles being tapped together. The tapping keeps an even tempo throughout.

Cope's Gray Treefrog

Hyla chrysoscelis

Visual: Medium size

**Enlarged toe pads
White rectangle beneath eye
Flash colors on thighs yellow-
orange**

Aural: Short raspy trill - 34-69 pulses/sec

Gray Treefrog

Hyla versicolor

Visual: Medium size

**Enlarged toe pads
White rectangle beneath eye
Flash colors on thighs yellow-
orange**

Aural: Short raspy trill - 17-35 pulses/sec

Note: Cope's Gray Treefrog cannot be distinguished from the Gray Treefrog visually. They must be identified by analyzing the pulse rate of the call at a standard temperature.

Green Treefrog

Hyla cinerea

Visual: Medium size

**Enlarged toe pads
Bright green coloration with
white stripe down sides
Back may be flecked with yellow
No dark spotting on back
Granulation on back smoother
than on belly**

Aural: Call is a nasal "queenk -queenk...."

Barking Treefrog

Hyla gratiosa

Visual: Medium size

**Enlarged toe pads
Color bright green to darkish
brown with white stripe down side
Some dark spotting or smudging
may be visible on back
Coarsely granulated skin all over**

**Aural: Tree call sounds like small dog
"yapping"
Advertisement call (given at the water's
surface) sounds like a beagle "baying"**

Bird-voiced Treefrog

Hyla avivoca

Visual: Medium size

**Enlarged toe pads
White rectangle beneath eye
Flash colors on thighs light
transparent green**

**Aural: A series of short "whistled"
notes - birdlike**

Mountain Chorus Frog

Pseudacris brachyphona

Visual: Small size

Reversed parenthesis marks on back

Light triangle between eyes

Aural: Short upward-slurred rasping call

Upland Chorus Frog

Pseudacris feriarum

Visual: Small size

Three dark broken stripes down back

Aural: Short upward-slurred rasping call

Spring Peeper

Pseudacris crucifer

Visual: Small size

Slightly enlarged toe pads

Cross on back

Aural: High piping “whistle”

“peep – peep – peep....”

Eastern Narrow-mouthed Toad

Gastrophryne carolinensis

Visual: Small size

Pointed, turtle-shaped head

Squat body with fold of skin behind eyes

Colors tan and brown with gray belly

Pupils round

Aural: High-pitched nasal “beeeeeeee....”

Sounds like a party horn

Eastern Spadefoot

Scaphiopus holbrookii

Visual: Small size

Toad-like in shape but smoother-skinned, red warts present

Small parotoid glands present

Vertical pupils (Appear diamond-shaped)

Spade on underside of rear feet

Aural: An explosive, “Errrrr....!”

American Bullfrog

Lithobates catesbeianus

Visual: Large size

Green to greenish-brown coloration
Fold of skin extending from behind
eye around tympanum but not down
back

Aural: A loud deep, “Jug-a-Rum”

Green Frog

Lithobates clamitans

Visual: Medium size

Green to tan coloration
Fold of skin extending from behind
eye around tympanum and down back

**Aural: Sounds like loose banjo string
Being plucked. Also “Cowardly
Lion” call**

Pickerel Frog

Lithobates palustris

Visual: Medium size

Square spots in two parallel
rows down back
Flash colors on thigh apricot-
colored

**Aural: Low pitched, descending drawn out
Snore – “yeeeeowwww...”**

Southern Leopard Frog

Lithobates sphenoccephalus

Visual: Medium size

Heavily spotted
Typanum has white spot in center

**Aural: Series of clucks given in a series
interspersed with groans that
sound like a hand rubbed over
a balloon**

Wood Frog

Lithobates sylvaticus

Visual: Medium size

Dark mask behind eye
Body mostly unmarked

**Aural: Random series of clucks with
little carrying power**

Crawfish Frog

Lithobates areolatus

Visual: Medium size

**Dark dorsal spots encircled
by light border
Prominent dorsolateral ridge
Belly whitish**

**Aural: Call is a loud, deep snore with
tremendous carrying power**

Gopher Frog

Lithobates capito

Visual: Medium size

**Dark dorsal spots not
encircled by white border
Prominent dorsolateral ridge
Belly mottled with dark
markings**

**Aural: Call is a loud, deep prolonged
snore or growl**