

## Quick Guide to Calling Amphibians

Reference: *Maine's Amphibians and Reptiles*

**Spring Peeper** (*Pseudacris crucifer*): One of Maine's most widespread species and our smallest frog, measuring under an inch and a half, with a dark, imperfect cross or "X" pattern on the back. It has relatively smooth skin and is generally brown to gray with some yellow on the throat. A full chorus of these tiny frogs can be heard up to a half-mile away; each male makes a shrill, pure, high-pitched breeding call.



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**Wood Frog** (*Rana sylvatica*): The first frog to emerge in the spring, the wood frog can tolerate cold and even freezing temperatures for short periods of time. It has a dark mask over and below each eye and is otherwise dark red or tan. Wood frogs are widespread in Maine but limit their breeding generally to temporary or vernal pools. The wood frog's call sounds like the quack of a duck.

**American Toad** (*Bufo americanus*): Maine's only toad, the American toad has dry, bumpy skin and is largely terrestrial, going in water only to breed and lay eggs. Its call is a high, musical trill that can last 30 seconds or more.



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**Northern Leopard Frog** (*Rana pipiens*): Apparent declines in the population make the northern leopard frog a species of "Special Concern" in the state of Maine. The leopard frog and its close cousin the pickerel frog are the only frogs in Maine with distinct spots. The leopard frog has two to three unevenly spaced rows of irregular oval spots on its back. Its call is a combination of slow snores and grunts, the snore sounding like the creak of an old door slowly opening.

**Pickerel Frog** (*Rana palustris*): This frog has two parallel rows of distinctive spots that are more squarish than the spots on its cousin the leopard frog. Pickerel frogs are probably the most visible frog and are widespread throughout the state in all types of wetlands. Its call is a series of snores and grunts, though it is shorter and faster than the leopard frog's and sounds more like a finger running over the tines of a comb.



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**Gray Treefrog** (*Hyla versicolor*): Gray treefrogs are not always gray but vary in color from green to light brown. Their skin is bumpy and warty, and they have sticky toe pads that allow them to cling to vertical surfaces. They are found in the southern and eastern part of the state. Their call is a short, melodic trill that lasts only a second or less, with a pause between repeated calls.

**Green Frog (*Rana clamitans*):** Green frogs are common throughout the state. They are generally green to brown on their back, with dark brown or grayish irregular spots, and two prominent folds that run along their sides, from their eye to their rear. Their song is a distinctive “unk” that sounds like a pluck on banjo strings, usually sung in a series of three or four descending notes.



**Mink Frog (*Rana septentrionalis*):** The most distinctive feature of this frog is its musky odor. It may be confused with a green frog though it usually has regular, dark mottling over its entire back and legs. Mink frogs are in the northern part of the state and downeast, and range north into Quebec and Labrador. Even in the right habitat, mink frogs are secretive and hard to find. Their call has been described as a series of taps sounding like two pieces of wood being tapped together.

**Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*):** The largest frogs in North America, bullfrogs may grow up to eight inches long. They lack the back ridges of other frog species and their color is generally uniform green or brown. Bullfrogs are the last of our frogs to emerge from hibernation and breed, and typically do not start calling in Maine until early summer. Their call is a low, resonant “rum,” repeated several times in succession.



## To learn more about Maine’s amphibians:

- Love science and natural history? Interested in teaching your kids about vernal pools? Want to connect with other professionals? If you would like to learn more about vernal pool ecology, conservation, research, and management, or access research papers, researchers, conservation guides, or educational materials for both adults and kids, please visit the Of Pools and People website ([vernalpools.me](http://vernalpools.me)). Have fun exploring!
- **Read the book *Maine Amphibians and Reptiles***, edited by Hunter, Calhoun and McCollough, University of Maine Press, 1999. This excellent reference book has information for every species of frog and toad found in Maine as well as information about our snakes, turtles and salamanders. Available at Maine Audubon Nature Stores in Falmouth and Holden.
- **Join Maine Audubon** to learn more at a program or on a field trip. Keep up with the latest amphibian conservation issues in Maine through the quarterly journal *Habitat*. For membership information, visit [maineaudubon.org](http://maineaudubon.org) or call (207) 781-2330.
- **Make your voice heard for Maine’s wildlife.** Keep abreast of legislative issues that affect wetlands, water quality and wildlife by joining Maine Audubon’s Activist Network. You will receive timely “action alerts” that let you know when and how to take action. For more information, visit [maineaudubon.org/act](http://maineaudubon.org/act).
- **Learn frog calls and test your frog identification skills** at the U.S. Geological Survey’s quiz site, [www.pwrc.usgs.gov/frogquiz](http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/frogquiz). You can listen to mixed choruses of different Maine frog species and then see if you can identify them.
- **Report your own frog sightings** at [frogwatch.next.fieldscope.org](http://frogwatch.next.fieldscope.org). This website has lots of natural history information as well as recordings of frogs from around the U.S.