

Blanchard's Cricket Frog (*Acris blanchardi*)

Family Hylidae

Subspecies: None currently recognized

Updated 2025



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Description/Identification: The Blanchard's Cricket Frog is a small species of treefrog ranging in size from about 0.78 to 0.98 inches in males, and 0.78 to 1.18 inches in females. Males and females are dimorphic in size, with females being slightly larger; however, the only other distinguishing characteristic are the dark subgular vocal sacs in males during the breeding season. Blanchard's Cricket Frogs have a moist, warty dorsum skin, and the ventral surface is more granular. Hind legs are relatively long in proportion to the rest of their bodies. The toes are extensively webbed, and the terminal toe pads about the same size or smaller than the digits. No subspecies are currently recognized, but were formerly a subspecies of the Northern Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans*). Inside the mouth, Blanchard's Cricket Frogs and other hylid frogs have only very small, nonpedicellate (or incomplete) teeth on the maxilla and premaxillae weakly attached to the bone, which in many cases, are only calcified at their tips. Their teeth are perhaps most visible only through a high magnification electron microscope. Also inside the front of the mouths of most anurans, Blanchard's Cricket Frogs included, is a projectile-like tongue made of extremely soft tissue, and which uses reverse adhesion and soft, viscoelastic properties coupled with non-Newtonian saliva.

The dorsal ground coloration can be variable, and may be green, light tan, or dark brown, and often there is a medial dorsal stripe varying in color from tan, rusty brown, reddish or bright red, or bright green. A darker brown or gray triangular mark is also usually present in-between the eyes with the apex pointed posteriorly. There is also a light line or stripe running from the eye to behind the shoulder, and a dark postfemoral stripe on the hind limbs and groin. The upper lip also usually has lighter and darker bars. The ventral surface is white to light yellow, or sometimes gray anteriorly. Subadults may be more brightly colored than adults, and some adults lack a noticeable medial dorsal stripe.



Tadpole. © University of California Berkeley.

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Tadpoles range from 10 to 35 mm upon hatching and development, and are pear shaped with a long, narrow finned tail. There are 2 upper and 2 lower labial tooth rows, and the papillary borders of the mouth extends ventrally to the lower rows. The lateral margin is also not folded at the beak. The dorsum color is olive to brown, and mottled with black. The underside is an iridescent pale yellow to white, and they are the only Wisconsin tadpoles with a black-tipped tail and narrow dark line running along the upper borders of the tail fins. Wisconsin's Gray Treefrogs (*Dryophytes versicolor*) and (*Dryophytes chrysoscelis*) are larger and have more well-developed toe-pads, and Boreal Chorus Frogs (*Pseudacris maculata*) and Spring Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) are less warty.

Link to Audio/Call: [Blanchard's \(Northern\) Cricket Frog \(*Acris crepitans*\) - YouTube](#)



© WDNR.

Range and Distribution: The Blanchard's Cricket Frog has a wide range in the United States from Wisconsin, Michigan, and southern Minnesota in the north, south and west through the Great Plains states to Coahuila, Mexico, Texas, extreme eastern New Mexico, and Colorado, and south to Tennessee in the eastern U.S. In Wisconsin, Blanchard's Cricket Frogs were historically a very abundant frog over much of the southern two-thirds of the state, but since then, their ranges have been drastically reduced to portions of the southwest, south-central, and extreme western Wisconsin.

Habitat: Blanchard's Cricket Frogs prefer open wetland habitats along rivers, river floodplains, fens, marshes, ponds, and low wet prairies usually near or along permanent bodies of running or flowing water. Open mud flats or stream and river banks with abundant emergent aquatic vegetation are preferred habitats, especially. Cricket Frogs will breed in stagnant or slow flowing areas of streams and rivers, but prefer adjacent ponds, lakes, and wetlands.

Feeding and Diet: Blanchard's Cricket Frogs are insectivorous, and are reported to feed indiscriminately on a wide variety of small insects, insect larvae, and other arthropods and invertebrates. The tadpoles filter feed on tiny aquatic algae and phytoplankton.

Natural History and Calls: Cricket Frogs may begin to emerge from overwintering as early as in early March, and remain active through the year until October or November, but usually begin breeding and calling from mid to late May through July. Their "cricket-like" calls, hence the name Cricket Frog, sound like the clicking of gravel stones or marbles rapidly together. Calling can occur both during the day and at

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night, where they usually call from emergent vegetation or from the shoreline or mud flats. Warm, heavy spring and summer rains often stimulate calling of Cricket Frogs.



Ventral/Belly View. © Gary Nafais.

During reproduction, females can deposit up to around 200 eggs fastened or attached to vegetation in flowing water in small clusters of about 10 to 15. The tadpoles then fully metamorphose by early to mid-August, and become sexually mature within one year. After breeding, adult Cricket Frogs become less active, but remain close to water throughout the summer and rest of the year. Cricket Frogs do not tolerate prolonged exposures to freezing or submersion well during the winter, and therefore seek a variety of microhabitats that provide suitable overwintering conditions, such as crayfish burrows, small mammal burrows, rotted-out root channels, seepage areas where groundwater flow prevents freezing at the surface or spaces created by sloughing stream banks.

Cricket Frogs are excellent jumpers, and are able to leap up to one meter per leap, which are these frogs' primary means of escape or defense against predators. In Wisconsin, Blanchard's Cricket Frogs have been historically a very abundant frog species over much of the southern two-thirds of the state, but up to about the 1980's and 1990's, have diminished rapidly and have become much more rare and lower in density. It is not fully known or understood what the exact causes are, or were attributing to the significant conservation issues facing Blanchard's Cricket Frogs in Wisconsin. However, habitat pollution and, habitat loss, and degradation (through wetland filling, erosion, and invasion of weedy and invasive plants), increased use of chemicals and pesticides, may all be significant factors contributing to the decline of these frogs in Wisconsin.

Natural predators of Blanchard's Cricket Frogs and their tadpoles can include a variety of large, carnivorous or predatory aquatic insects and/or insect larvae such as water bugs and water beetles, dragonfly larvae, and large spiders, as well as turtles, fish, other frogs and/or amphibian larvae, snakes, a wide array of birds, and many different small to medium sized carnivorous mammals including opossums, skunks, raccoons, shrews, weasels, mink, foxes, and other mammals.

Conservation Status: The Blanchard's Cricket Frog is currently listed as a State of Wisconsin Endangered Species, and only occur in much lower densities and ranges in the state compared to their historical levels. They are currently the only state threatened or endangered amphibian species in Wisconsin, and are also the rarest anuran, or frog species in Wisconsin. Blanchard's Cricket Frogs are currently not

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protected or regulated federally. Blanchard's Cricket Frogs are currently IUCN Red-List Least Concern (LC).