

# River Bend Naturalist Notebook

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault Minnesota

Illustrations by Moe Brand • Text by Amanda Ludeman, Intern Naturalist



## Gray Treefrog

*Hyla versicolor*

The gray treefrog (also known as the common treefrog) is widely distributed across the Eastern United States and can also be found in parts of Canada. With its size of 1 ½ to 2 inches, it is the largest treefrog in Minnesota and is found across the state, except for the southwest corner. Typically, this frog appears in forests but also can be found in wooded areas near water. Its ability to live in forests is enhanced by the enlarged toe pads on its fingers and toes, which can secrete a sticky substance to help them cling to trees and other objects.

The skin of gray treefrogs can be gray but also varies widely among shades of green, and brown. The frog's color is dependent upon the temperature, light, and vegetation in its environment. The green coloration tends to surface when it is warm and bright while the grays and browns occur in colder, darker conditions. A distinctive characteristic of this species is the orange-yellow patches located on the inside of the hind legs. The gray treefrog

also has two bands on each of its four limbs and a star-shaped patch on the upper back, though these features may not always be distinctive.

Gray treefrogs overwinter in leaf litter or under other materials on the forest floor. Their bodies partially freeze during this time. In fact, they produce substances such as glycerol and glucose that prevent ice formation (and thus the damage to body cells). The treefrogs emerge in May and soon begin breeding. Males and females are very similar in appearance. Usually it is the male that produces the loud trilling call of the species.

The frog's eggs are laid at the base of grasses on the water's surface and hatch in 2-3 days. The gold-tinged tadpoles develop quickly and reach their adult form in about seven weeks. Gray treefrogs are most active in the evening and through the night. They feed on caterpillars and insects.