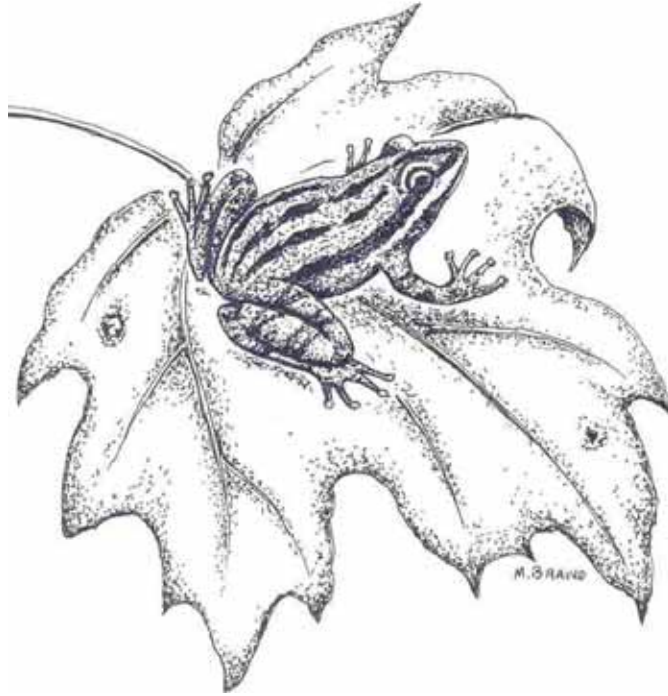


Naturalist Notebook

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER

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Western Chorus Frog - *Pseudacris triseriata*

At the arrival of spring, western chorus frogs are one of the first amphibians to make their presence known. The frogs overwinter near areas with permanent water. Spring thaws will cause the frogs to emerge from their overwintering sites in search of a mate and an ideal breeding location.

The western chorus frog has a range across the eastern and central United States, and is found statewide in Minnesota. The body length is around one inch. The frog can have various coloration patterns, called morphs. Light brown, gray, and green morphs are most common. The frog's belly is tan and unmarked. The back usually has 3 darker stripes that may be broken, reduced, or absent. The frog also has a heavy dark stripe from the snout through the eyes and down the sides. The spring peeper is a frog with similar size and time of spring emergence, but the peeper has a distinctive "X" mark on the back.

Western chorus frogs can live in diverse habitats, including wetlands, woodlands, and fields. Temporary aquatic habitats such as agricultural fields and roadside ditches can also provide for frog breeding. Frogs mate and breed in mostly permanent freshwater areas for two important reasons. One reason is that predators have easier access to eggs and tadpoles as temporary aquatic areas dry up. In addition, frogs will fail to reproduce successfully if the tadpoles do not transform before the temporary habitat dries up.

In late March through early April, the frogs will emerge from their overwintering sites. As its common name suggests, males often call in large groups called choruses. The call resembles a finger running down the teeth of a stiff comb. Frogs may cease trilling when approached, and the whole chorus may fall silent due to the cessation of a single frog's calling.

After mating, the frogs become more secretive. Small groups of 5 to 20 eggs are laid by females on submerged vegetation, although the female can lay hundreds of eggs over the course of a breeding season. Eggs hatch into tadpoles within 18 days, and tadpoles transform into frogs after 8 to 10 weeks.

Some nature lovers wait until the ice thaws and snow melts as signs of spring; others wait for the first sight of their favorite migratory bird. If you're eagerly waiting for the new season, head over to your local pond or wetlands. The arrival of spring will be heard by the resounding chorus.