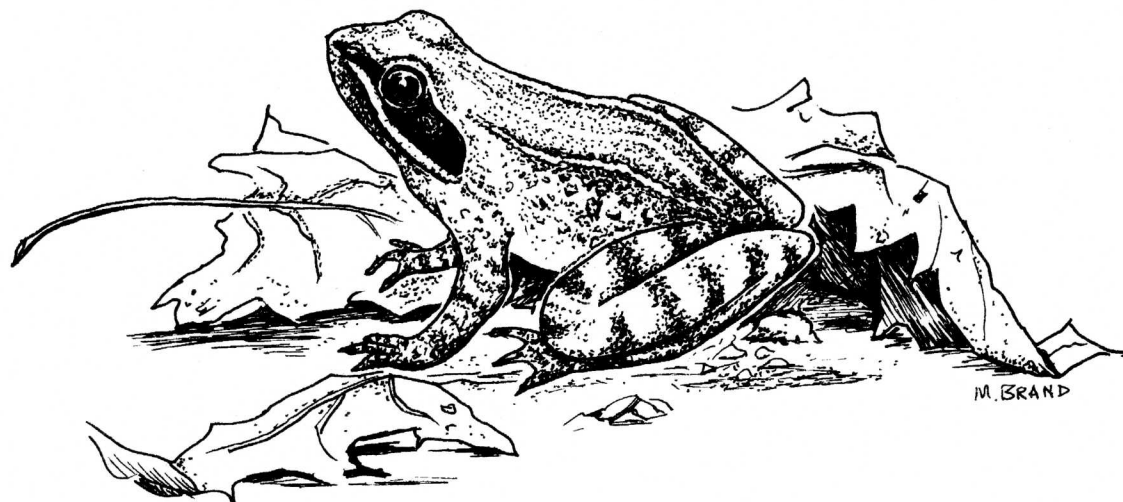


Naturalist Notebook

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER

Illustrations by Moe Brand ~Text by Lindsey Fosdick, Naturalist Educator Intern



Wood Frog - *Rana sylvatica*

Wood frogs, usually 1 ¾" – 3 ¼" long (3.5-8.3 cm), are the first frogs you hear in spring; they are out before the ponds are completely thawed. Though these frogs are found in many colors, they are distinguishable by their robber's mask, a dark patch extending back from the eye and ending behind the eardrum. Wood frogs also have a raised ridge or dorsal lateral fold that runs along each side of its back that runs from the mask to the groin. Wood frogs eat insects and other small invertebrates and may be preyed upon by birds.

Wood frogs breed among temporary ponds, and the breeding season lasts from March until May. Males actively look and call for females through a series of short, hoarse, raspy duck-like quacks, but once mating season is over, their calls will no longer be heard. The female lays 1,000-3,000 eggs at a time, usually in the deepest part of

the pond. She may attach them to an object or leave them freestanding. Eggs are usually laid in communal egg masses. Tadpoles undergo complete metamorphosis in two months and reach sexual maturity at two years.

The wood frog is found farther north than any other North American amphibian; in fact, they are the only frogs found north of the Arctic Circle. Amazingly, these hearty frogs survive the winter by partially freezing. Thirty-five to forty percent of the frog's body freezes. When this occurs, blood flow, breathing, and heart beat cease. In North America, wood frogs can be found from Maine west to North Dakota and south of the Appalachians. They reside in or near moist wooded areas and after breeding are known to travel far from water.