

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

Wood Frog, Spring Peeper, and Boreal Chorus Frog POST #25—April 14, 2022

April can be a trying month for those of us in Northern Minnesota. As I type this post, it is snowing for the second day in a row! Most of our wintering species, like redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks have left, and it can be early (or too cold!) for some species to emerge or arrive. However, there is a group of species that makes this season a little more tolerable. Today's post features a trio of early season frogs: Wood Frog, Boreal Chorus Frog, and Spring Peeper!

Early April is the start of the season where amphibians make their presence known in the northern parts of the North America. Whether it is the impressive salamander migrations in the Eastern US or the sounds of Wood Frogs breaking through the early spring cold, amphibians are an amazing group.

Wood Frogs are one of the most well-known frogs in our area. They have incredible adaptations against the cold, are one of the earliest frogs to sing in a year, and are the northern most amphibian species in North America. Because of their notoriety,

let's take some time to check out the other two early season frogs!

Boreal Chorus Frogs were formerly known as Western Chorus Frog. Through recent research, Western Chorus Frog was split into three species and Boreal Chorus Frog is the only Chorus Frog in Minnesota. It is a very common species and occurs throughout the state of Minnesota. Boreal Chorus Frog is one of five species of tree frog in Minnesota, though it has very small toe pads and is not a great climber. They also have very short hindlegs, making them a poor hopper, as far as frogs go.

Spring Peepers are more typical for a tree frog and are the smallest frog in our area. They have large toe pads, but spend most of their time around wetlands. For their size, Spring Peepers are incredibly loud! Like Wood Frog and Boreal Chorus Frog, Spring Peepers overwinter on land, near breeding ponds making logs and leaf litter important to their survival.

While none of these species have yet begun calling in the Sax-Zim Bog, we should expect them to begin their spring chorus anytime now!

More information about these species on the photos below!
(Photos below by Sparky Stensaas and Head Naturalist Clinton)



Wood Frogs have a distinct black mask and white lip liner. This is an amazing species and in our area we sometimes find Wood Frogs with a unique dorsal stripe down the center of their back! This was formerly considered to be a northern subspecies, *Lithobates sylvatica maslinii*.



Wood Frogs in breeding condition are a brick red color and lack their usual mask. They are also pretty unique for frogs in our area, as they have two throat sacs that they use to make their calls!



Spring Peepers are small and cryptic. The best way to ID them is the dark X mark on their backs. Spring Peepers might be a Spring season species in our area, but call during the winter in the southern part of their range!



Boreal Chorus Frogs have a single throat sac, typical of most frogs in our area. Their "comb raking" vocalization can be heard as early as Wood Frogs.



Like Gray and Cope's Gray Treefrog, Boreal Chorus Frogs can change color and in our region you can sometimes find greenish chorus frogs!