

crawfish frog *Lithobates areolatus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Family: Ranidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The crawfish frog averages two and one-fourth to three inches in length. It has a short body and a large head. The male has vocal pouches on the sides of the throat. Dark spots on the back are circled by light borders. The belly is white, and the back is smooth. Dorsolateral folds are present along each side of the back. There is mottling on the upper jaws and a hump in the middle of the back. The tympanum (eardrum) is not wider than the eye.

BEHAVIORS

The crawfish frog may be found in the southern one-half of Illinois. It lives in crawfish holes, storm drains, small mammal burrows and holes in roadside banks in areas with hardpan, clay soil. Wet pastures and golf courses are preferred habitats. This frog is nocturnal, spending the daylight hours in burrows or tunnels. It breeds from March through mid-April, but breeding is dependent on temperature and rainfall. The male's call is a chuckling, deep snore. The female deposits about 7,000 eggs in shallow water in large, submerged masses. Breeding sites include flooded fields, fish-free farm ponds and small lakes in pastures or golf courses. Hatching occurs in several days. The tadpoles transform into the land-based form in late June and early July. The crawfish frog eats crustaceans and insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge

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