

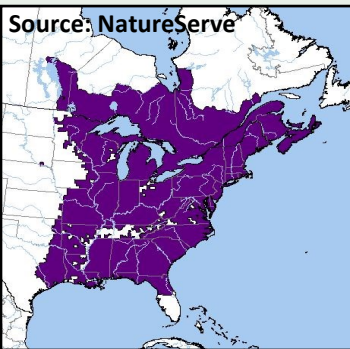
# Spring Peepers and the Department of Defense



Picture by: Chris Petersen

The Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*) is a common frog species on military lands. Its scientific species name “crucifer” is derived from the Latin word *crucis*, which means “cross-bearing”. This refers to the cross-like pattern on the frog’s back.

**Description:** Adults are typically  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in (1.9 to 3.2 cm) in length. Spring Peepers are light brown, tan, rusty orange, gray, or olive on top. Dark brown lines are present across the hind limbs and between the eyes, and form the characteristic X-shaped mark across the back. The belly is plain cream or white. Toe pads are wider than the toes. Males have dark throats and are usually smaller and darker than the females.



Source: NatureServe

**Range:** The Spring Peeper’s range extends from Ontario and Quebec south to northern Florida, and west to Manitoba, Minnesota, Iowa, eastern Kansas, Oklahoma, and eastern Texas.

**Habitat:** This species inhabits wooded areas, especially near wetland sites. It is particularly abundant in brushy secondary growth or cutover woodlots if they are close to wetlands. Breeding and egg-laying occur in small temporary or permanent freshwater wetlands such as ponds, marshes, ditches, and swamps, especially those with standing plants, sticks, or other debris.

**Behavior:** The species is mostly terrestrial and hides under leaf litter, logs, rocks, or other objects when inactive. Males produce a high “peep” call (usually at one-second intervals) among herbaceous vegetation adjacent to or in water. Females lay between 750-1300 eggs in small clusters. Spring Peepers can survive even if most of their bodies freeze during hibernation. This is possible because they produce an antifreeze-like substance called glycerol that prevents ice crystals from forming in their body tissues. They feed mainly of small insects such as ants, beetles, and flies, as well as spiders, and may help to control certain insect populations.

**Military Interactions:** The Spring Peeper is a very common frog species on DoD lands. They are more often heard vocalizing on rainy nights than encountered.

**Conservation Status:** The Spring Peeper is not federally- or state-listed as endangered or threatened. This species has a NatureServe conservation ranking of G5-Secure and IUCN Red List category as Least Concern.

**Threats/Planning Considerations:** Threats to this species include destruction/alteration of wetland habitats and chytrid fungus. Military natural resources managers should try to conserve a buffer of upland habitats that surround known breeding wetland sites.

## Occurrence on Military Lands

Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on 120 military properties (17 Air Force; 63 Army; 6 Marine Corps; and 34 Navy).	Up to an additional 72 military properties (17 Air Force; 28 Army; 1 Marine Corps; and 26 Navy).

