

Northern green frog

Rana clamitans

The northern green frog is one of North America's larger frogs and can be found in the Chicago River wherever habitat and food is abundant. Adult green frogs can range in length from 2½ to 4½ inches. Males of the species tend to be smaller than females. They are solitary frogs, except during the breeding season, when they congregate to breed. Green frogs can produce as many as six different calls, used to attract each other during mating, to protect their territories or to warn against predators. The name clamitans in Latin means "loud calling."

Contrary to its name, the color of green frogs varies greatly. They can be green, brown, bronze or even blue depending on local variations. They can be mistaken for bullfrogs – but green frogs are smaller and have a tympanum that is larger than their eye. The tympanum is their hearing organ (it resembles a flat circle on the side of their head). The belly is white, with dark lines and spots. Their skin is smooth and moist, which allows them to absorb oxygen, assisting their lungs.

Green frogs are native to the eastern half of the United States and Canada, and are present in many Illinois counties. They are known for their long powerful hind legs and are excellent jumpers, and hunt along the edges of rivers and ponds.

Green frogs have an excellent sense of vision and use this to detect and capture prey. They are primarily carnivores and eat a variety of insects and other invertebrates from both land and water, such as slugs, snails, crayfish, spiders, flies, caterpillars, butterflies, and moths. They also eat vertebrates, such as small snakes and even other frogs. Green frogs practice opportunist hunting and will sit and wait, eating whatever comes within reach.

The green frog is abundant and is not considered threatened. Habitat loss and pollution due to shoreline development has had a huge impact on some frog populations. Frog populations are few and far between downtown because of limited habitat, but there are healthy populations in the North Branch, South Branch and along the Calumet system.

Frog Fun Facts:

- Frogs absorb water through their skin so they don't need to drink.
- Frogs swallow their food whole.
- Frog bones form a new ring every year when the frog is hibernating, just like a tree. Scientists can count these rings to discover the age of the frog.
- Frogs don't see color - they only see in black or white.
- A frog's skin reflects the same amount of ultraviolet light as its immediate surroundings. This way it can protect itself from predators like snakes, who detect heat.
- Some frogs can survive in conditions well below freezing. They do this by making their own "antifreeze," which stops their body from freezing completely.

Friends of the Chicago River

