

ILLINOIS ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

ILLINOIS CHORUS FROG

Pseudacris streckeri

THREATENED

Class: Amphibia

Order: Salientia

Family: Hylidae

The common name of the Illinois chorus frog comes from the fact that isolated populations of the species occur in Illinois and the habit of the frogs to "sing" in groups during their breeding season.

Habitat

Illinois chorus frogs are found only in open sandy areas which in Illinois occur along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Bare areas known as "blowouts" apparently provide good habitat for the frogs.

Description

Chorus frogs are relatively small, their body being only about 1.5 to 1.75 inches long. They look much like toads, with short stocky bodies and stout forelegs adapted for digging. The skin is tan or light bronze with brown markings. The markings include a stripe from the snout to each shoulder, a spot under the eye, and a V- or Y-shaped mark between the eyes. Spots and blotches of various sizes and shapes occur on the back and legs. Males are slightly smaller than females and have a vocal pouch.



Life History

Most breeding of Illinois chorus frogs occurs in March. The first sign of breeding activity is the sound of many frogs calling from wet areas. The males often call while mostly submerged in the water and are very difficult to see while calling. A female can lay about 400 eggs. Chorus frog tadpoles have usually transformed to frogs by late

May to mid June. Illinois chorus frogs are seen above ground only during the spring breeding season. During the hotter summer months they stay underground where the temperature is more moderate and in the winter they move underground and become dormant until spring. The heavy front legs of this species make it easy for them to dig through the sand. Illinois chorus frogs dig into the sand headfirst, while toads dig with their front feet and then turn around to back into the hole. The diet of Illinois chorus frogs consists of insects while above ground and of a variety of small invertebrates when the frogs are underground.

Distribution

Frogs of the species *Pseudacris streckeri* occur over much of eastern Texas and central Oklahoma, in small areas of north-central Arkansas, southeast Missouri, and central and southwest Illinois. In Illinois, this species has been found in Mason, Alexander, Tazewell, Madison, Cass, Monroe, Scott, and Morgan counties. It is thought that Illinois chorus frogs came to Illinois during a period in which the climate of the midwest was much drier and warmer than it is now. When conditions changed to the cooler, wetter climate we see now, this species was able to survive in the areas mentioned above.

Current Status

The Illinois chorus frog is classified as a threatened species in Illinois. Although the species is usually abundant in the small areas where it occurs, there are few areas of suitable sandy habitat remaining in the state. Many areas in which chorus frogs have been able to

survive are threatened by increasing agricultural use of sand areas. Growing of Christmas trees, which changes habitat conditions in ways that adversely affect chorus frogs, has also become more common in sandy parts of Illinois.

Management Needs

In order to assure that Illinois chorus frogs continue to survive in Illinois, it is essential that sandy areas with small wet areas be preserved. In areas that are already protected, such as Sand Ridge State Forest in Mason County, habitat for chorus frogs can be maintained by removing trees and other vegetation from once open areas.



**ILLINOIS ENDANGERED
SPECIES PROTECTION
BOARD**



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

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If you see an endangered or threatened species in Illinois, please report the sighting to the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board, Lincoln Tower Plaza, 524 S. Second, Springfield, IL 62701-1787, (217)785-8774. Give as many details as possible about the sighting and include your name and address.

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