



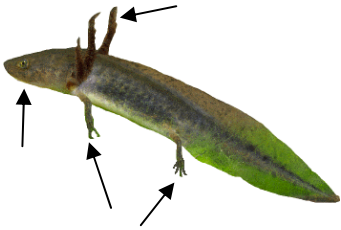
A Guide to Amphibian Larvae of Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

By Michael Redmer

This guide is intended to aid field identification of the larval frogs and toads (tadpoles) and salamander larva known (as of 2000) from Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Users should be familiar with larval/tadpole morphological terms as discussed in "Tips for Identifying Tadpoles and Salamander Larvae." That literature should have been distributed with this guide.

KEY

- ◆ = Best characteristics for identifying a particular species; Corresponds with arrows on pictures.
- = Secondary characteristics (including habitat and behavioral notes) which may aid identification.



Eastern Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)

- ◆ Four limbs throughout larval period identify this as a salamander.
- ◆ Bushy external gills; tail fin high and begins behind head.
- ◆ Body gray to green in color; throat not pigmented, or if so only weakly along sides.
- Four front toes which are conspicuously tapered; five rear toes.
- Found in deeper water of small ponds which usually lack predatory fishes.
- Present from early March to as late as mid July.



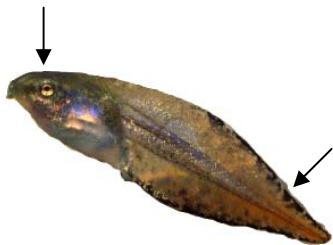
American Toad (*Bufo americanus*)

- ◆ Eyes small, do not bulge wider than body.
- Small size, largest individual rarely exceed 20mm (0.8 in) in total length.
- Mostly black in color, may have some small brassy flecks.
- ◆ Tail fin low, blunt-tipped, and originates above tail muscle behind body.
- ◆ When disturbed, swims in short, weak bursts, and then sinks back to substrate.
- Usually in large groups which graze in shallow water of ponds, ditches, stream margins.
- Present from early April through June.



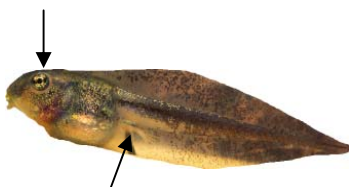
Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans*)

- Eyes even with, or may slightly bulge beyond sides of head.
- ◆ Tail fin is long and low; originates on back of body.
- Tan or gray in overall coloration, sometimes with brown saddles on tail muscle.
- ◆ Usually has a distinctive black-tipped tail.
- Weedy areas of permanent ponds/lakes, sloughs, marshes, or weedy stream margins.
- Present May through early August.



Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*)

- ◆ Eyes bulge notably wider than sides of head.
- Tail fin is high-arched, originates on back of body.
- ◆ Tail fin is bordered by black blotches, and usually is awash with red-orange coloration.
- In clear water, may loaf/swim near surface or mid-water column by day.
- Temporary ponds, sloughs, marshes, or shallow weedy margins of streams.
- Present May through early August.

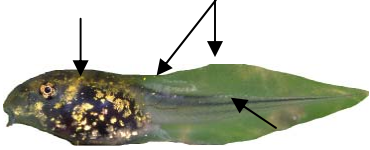


Striped, or Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*)

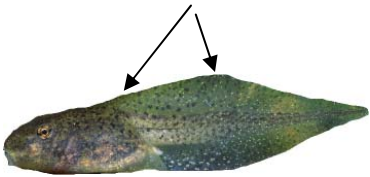
- ◆ Eyes bulge notably wider than sides of head.
- Tail fin is high-arched, originates on back of body.
- Body tan-brown; tail fin is weakly mottled with fine pigment.
- ◆ Tail musculature w/dark stripe on middle; usually with a light area on anterior of ventral edge.
- Found in most shallow weedy habitats: temporary ponds, sloughs, swales, and marshes.
- Present March through early June.

Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*)

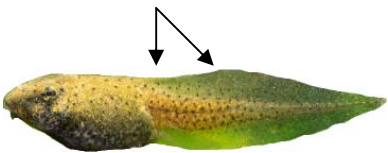
- Eyes do not bulge wider than sides of head.
- ◆ Tail fin moderately high and arched; originates above front of tail muscle; apex of arch almost angular in appearance.
- Weedy permanent/semi-permanent bodies of water (lakes ponds, marshes, streams).
- Present in three distinct color phases from June through May (over winters as tadpole).
- **Young phase** (to about 30mm/1.25 inch in total length)



- Found throughout breeding season [May-July] until about one month after it ends.
- Present in shallow densely weedy water.
- Blackish color w/brassy-golden spots
- ◆ Distinctive golden crescent behind eyes.
- ◆ Tail musculature is light colored; tail fin transparent or milky in appearance.



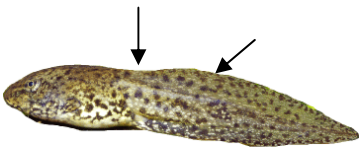
- **Middle phase** (over 30mm/1.25inch to 70mm/2.75 inches in total length)
- found from ~mid June to October
- Present in greater range of habitats and water depths than young phase.
- ◆ Body, tail muscle, generally grayish in color with some black spots;
- ◆ Tail fin may somewhat transparent with black and light spots.



- **Late phase** (usually over 75mm/3 inches in total length)
- Found winter, and through spring until metamorphosis in late April or May.
- May be present nearly anywhere in permanent aquatic habitats.
- ◆ Usually gray to olive green in color, w/black spots on head, tail muscle and tail fins.

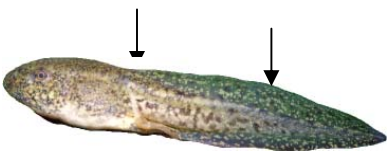
Green Frog (*Rana clamitans*)

- Eyes do not bulge wider than sides of head.
- Maximum total length approximately 75mm (3 inches)
- ◆ Tail fin not very transparent; originates behind of body; is long and low.
- Tan background color; heavily mottled with dark spots.
- Weedy permanent/semi-permanent bodies of water (lakes ponds, marshes, streams).
- ◆ Present from June through May (over winters as tadpole).
- Dorsolateral folds begin to appear by March in tadpoles that survive winter.



Plains Leopard Frog (*Rana blairi*)

- Eyes do not bulge wider than sides of head.
- Maximum total length approximately 75mm (3 inches)
- ◆ Tail fin is fairly transparent; originates behind body; is long and low.
- Tan background color; mottled with dark spots (large on tail fin; smaller on body).
- Shallow (temporary or semi-permanent) ponds, marshes, oxbows, or swales.
- Present April through early July.



Northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*)

- Eyes do not bulge wider than sides of head.
- ◆ Tail fin originates on body; is high and arched.
- Maximum total length approximately 60mm (2.5 inches)
- ◆ Gray in color, with some faint brassy flecks (especially on sides of body).
- ◆ Tail fin usually fairly transparent or opaque with small dark or light flecks.
- Tail musculature ranges from gray to tan in color.
- Shallow (temporary or semi-permanent) ponds, marshes, oxbows, or swales.
- Present April through early July.

