Frogs and toads

Photos courtesy
Michael Redmer

Frogs and toads use their well-developed voices to attract mates, proclaim feeding territories and signal alarm, and each species has a unique mating call. Sound is produced by passing air over their vocal cords. The loose skin under their jawbones is called a vocal sac, which resonates or amplifies sound. Both males and females have vocal cords, although they are better developed in males.

As warm weather fills the spring air with the calls of frogs and toads, see how many species you can identify using these clues.

The call of the 1-inch long **cricket frog** (*Acris crepitan*), Illinois' smallest frog, sounds similar to marbles clacking together.

The sound of a high-pitched "peeep" can help you locate the **spring peeper** (*Pseudacris crucifer*). An "X" on its back makes visual identification easy.

Imagine running your finger down the teeth of a comb and you'll know the call of one of the **chorus frogs** (*Pseudacris maculata, P. triseriata* or *P. feriarum*).

Illinois' largest frog, the **bullfrog** (*Rana catesbeiana*), has a deep, bass "jug-a-rum" breeding call.

One of two species of toads found in Illinois, the **American toad** (*Bufo americanus*) emits a call with 10-30 melodious trills. Visually, know this toad as the species with only one or two warts on each spot.

Its cousin, the **Fowler's toad** (*Bufo fowleri*), has a trill-like bleat call and three or more warts in the largest, dark spots.

Hear one to three explosive twangs of a banjo from a woodland pond? That's the call of *Rana clamitans*, the **green frog**.