



crawfish frog

Rana areolata

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Amphibia
Order: Anura
Family: Ranidae

Features

The crawfish frog ranges from 2 1/4 to 4 1/2 inches long. It has a short body and a large head. The male has vocal pouches on the sides of the throat. Light borders circle dark spots on the back. The belly is white and the back is smooth. Dorsolateral folds (two parallel folds of skin) are present along each side of the back. There is mottling on the upper jaws and a hump in the middle of the back. The tympanum (eardrum) is not wider than the eye.

Natural History

The crawfish frog lives in crawfish holes, small mammal burrows, and holes in roadside banks in areas with hard-pan, clay soil. Wet pastures and lowland meadows are preferred habitats. It eats crustaceans and insects. This frog is nocturnal, spending the daylight hours in burrows or tunnels. It breeds from March through April, but timing is dependent on temperature and rainfall. The male's call is a chuckling, deep snore. The female deposits about 7,000 eggs in shallow water in large,

submerged masses. Hatching occurs in several days. The tadpoles overwinter and transform into the land-based froglets in their second year. While the crawfish frog was found in southeastern Iowa in the early 1940s, not a single frog has been found in recent years.

Habitats

Interior rivers and streams; temporary water supplies; wet prairies and fens; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

endangered; native

Little is known about why crawfish frogs have seemingly disappeared from Iowa. They were found in several places in southeastern Iowa (Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Van Buren, and Wayne counties) in the early 1940s, but not one frog has been seen in recent years.

Iowa Range

southeast Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.