

## Camou-Frogs



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gray tree frog [www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us)

New Hampshire has ten native species of frogs. Most of these frogs are what one might expect of frogs in the cool climate found here: they live in or near ponds, they have moist, smooth skin, and they hibernate at the bottom of ponds in winter. The gray tree frog, on the other hand, is not what one might expect. It lives in trees, it has bumpy skin, and it hibernates in leaf litter on the forest floor. It is more like something one might find in a tropical rain forest.

Gray tree frogs are not always gray. Their color depends on the color of their background and on the temperature. These well-camouflaged frogs vary from almost white to gray to light green. They are often heard, but seldom seen. They hunt insects among the trees at night and spend much of the day resting under loose bark or in tree crevices. They are the only frogs in New Hampshire that have sticky toe pads that enable them to cling to vertical surfaces, even glass.

For most plants and animals, freezing causes ice crystals to form. These crystals effectively rupture the cells, allowing fluids to escape. (Think about what happens to lettuce when it freezes... it turns to mush due to ruptured cells.) Most local amphibians survive winter by burrowing into the muddy bottom of ponds. The mud is cold, but it does not freeze. Unlike most of their local cousins, gray tree frogs can withstand freezing. Gray tree frogs make lots of natural anti-freeze inside their bodies. This anti-freeze prevents the formation of ice crystals. During winter, gray tree frogs actually do freeze and their hearts and lungs stop working. When the temperature warms in spring, these little wonders thaw out and return to life.

Gray tree frogs do not need water for their daily lives or for hibernation, but they do need access to water for breeding. Breeding season runs from April to August. The females are attracted to the males with the best songs. (To listen to the song, visit <http://wildlifeofct.com/gray%20treefrog.html>.) Once they find the perfect mate, they lay up to 2000 eggs in groups of 10-40 on vegetation. The tadpoles hatch in 4 or 5 days. The tiny froglets emerge from the water in about two months.

The next time you walk in the woods or near a pond, listen for the trill of these frogs. If you are really lucky, you might be able to see this small hidden treasure.

