

Northern Cricket Frog

Aeris crepitans
Family Hylidae



Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S4 (NM); SH (CO)

Distribution: Occurs throughout most of the middle and eastern parts of the United States, and into northeastern Mexico and Ontario, Canada. In the west, it is now restricted to southeastern New Mexico and eastern Colorado. It formerly occurred as far west as Arizona and possibly Utah, but is now considered to be extinct in those states. It has not been seen in Colorado since 1979, and may no longer be present there. In New Mexico, the Blanchard's subspecies (*A. C. blanchardi*) is often abundant along the permanent springs and rivers of the Pecos River drainage of Eddy and Chaves Counties. It also may occur in DeBaca County near Fort Sumner and between Roswell and Fort Sumner. It ranges between 2,950 ft. (900 m.) and 3,600 ft. (1,100 m.) in elevation, and may occur as high as 4,000 ft. (1,225 m.) in DeBaca County.

Description: Adults reach up to 1 1/2 in. (3.7 cm.) in snout-vent length. It is a small, slim-



Current range of the northern cricket frog

waisted frog with slender webbed toes and a triangular mark on the head. There are no toe pads. Coloration is gray, light brown, green, reddish, or reddish green above, usually with a middorsal stripe of similar color. The gray form is common in the western and northern parts of its range. There are dark markings on the back and dark bands on the legs. White bars extend from eyes to base of forelegs, and a dark stripe is found on the rear of the thigh. Adult males have dusky throats, suffused with yellow, and more spotting than in females below. The voice is a metallic *gick, gick, gick*, about one call per second, with the rate gradually increasing. The vocal sac is round.

Reproduction: Calling begins in mid-March and continues until mid-September, both day and night. Breeding takes place between late April and mid-June. Females deposit between 200 and 400 eggs on aquatic vegetation, either singly or in small clusters. Some females may lay two clutches during the breeding season. Larvae are in the ponds from early May to early August, and metamorphosis occurs by mid-August.

Food: Food habits largely unknown. Likely to feed on a variety of invertebrates including beetles, ants, true bugs, caterpillars, caddisflies, and annelid worms.

Habits: The preferred habitat is low, sunny, marshy areas along rivers, streams, and desert springs where there is abundant vegetation. They bask on sunny banks of shallow pools, often in groups. Individuals scatter when frightened, leaping high and fast, or skittering over the surface of the water. They are active all year except for mid-winter at higher elevations.

Management Implications: This species is believed to be a relic species in the Chihuahuan Desert of New Mexico, and is existing in

disjunct populations considerably removed from the main portion of the range. It apparently has become extinct in Arizona and possibly Utah within the last hundred years, and has not been seen in Colorado since 1979. This may indicate the need to protect their preferred habit.

Important References: Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. The Peterson Field Guide Series, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY; Degenhardt, W.G., C.W. Painter, and A.H. Price. 1996. Amphibians and reptiles of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM; Hammerson, G.A. 1999. Amphibians and reptiles in Colorado. University Press of Colorado, Niwot, CO.