



The Frogs and Toads of Long Hunter State Park

During spring and summer we often get questions from park visitors about the frog calls they're hearing. Much like birds, frogs are heard more than seen. We thought it would be helpful to mention some species you might hear at Long Hunter.

Probably the first frog heard each year -- generally in February or March -- is the Upland Chorus Frog. Their unique call, described by some as the sound of someone rubbing their finger across the teeth of a comb, makes them easy to identify by sound. During warm weather in late winter and early spring, their vocalizations often fill the woods at night. Chorus frogs are small, well camouflaged (brownish or grayish), and rarely seen.

A bit later, perhaps in April or May, you'll hear our famous Fowler's Toad. They are frequently heard around Couchville Lake on spring evenings, with their drawn-out "waaaah" calls echoing across the water. Of all the species found here, these are the ones you're most likely to see. They are medium size, brown to gray with black warty spots, and are often found resting on logs or beside trails -- or even hopping around the parking lots. You may still hear a few of these calling in June and July.



Calling soon after the Fowler's Toads - or at about the same time - is the Cope's Gray Treefrog (pictured above). As their name implies, these medium-sized grayish/greenish frogs spend much of their time in the treetops. Their short "trilling" calls are distinctive and often create a symphony of sound in the night woods.

During our frog programs at the park, we've often found large numbers of Cope's Gray Treefrogs clinging to trees beside the ponds and sinkholes around Couchville Lake.

If you've ever heard something at Long Hunter that sounded like two marbles click-clacking together, then you probably heard the call of the Northern Cricket Frog. During late spring and summer these frogs can be heard regularly around Couchville Lake, even in daylight hours.

These tiny, dark, well-camouflaged frogs are generally located at the water's edge, but they are difficult to find by sight. However, their distinctive sound lets you know the Northern Cricket Frogs are around.

Perhaps the most comical frog call in our area is the Eastern Narrow-mouthed Toad. When these guys start calling, you might think Couchville Lake has been invaded by a pack of wild sheep! But no, the high-pitched bleating sound you hear is just these tiny, dark-colored, pointy-headed frogs.

Like the cricket frog, Eastern Narrow-mouthed Toads are well camouflaged and very difficult to see. During late spring and summer, you will often hear them calling during the day around Couchville Lake and in other wet, swampy areas of the park.

Our newest addition to the park is the unmistakable Green Treefrog (pictured below). We hadn't heard this species at Long Hunter until the summer of 2010. Since then, two populations call from the same two coves at Couchville Lake. In fact, one summer a lone Green Treefrog was even heard calling beside the dried up stream at Couchville Cedar Glade.



Their loud, unusual call (a nasally, repeated "queenk, queenk, queenk") and bright lime green color make them easy to identify by sight or sound. Traditionally a West Tennessee species that favors swampy habitats, the Green Treefrogs normally start calling here in June.

Three other frogs commonly heard at Long Hunter (but not in large numbers as compared to the aforementioned species) are the American Bullfrog, Green Frog and Southern Leopard Frog.

The American Bullfrog (pictured on page 1) is typically the largest of our frogs. They are green-to-brown in color and can be identified by their deep, base-filled "vroom" call. Being the "king" of frogs around these parts, the bullfrog is known to eat literally anything it can fit into its mouth -- including snakes, frogs and even small birds.

A close relative of the American Bullfrog is the Green Frog, which is slightly smaller than a bullfrog and greenish/brownish in color. Their call, which sounds similar to someone plucking a broken banjo string, is sometimes a single "glunk" or a descending "glunk, glunk, glunk".

Green Frogs are often heard in the sinkholes and ponds beside Couchville Lake, both during the day and at night.

The Southern Leopard Frog (pictured next page) is another species that stands out by sight and sound. This medium-sized frog has dark round spots on its green-and-brown back. Its pointy snout also sets it apart from other local species.

Its call is difficult to describe but sounds similar to someone rubbing their finger on a balloon, fast and repeatedly. They are heard sporadically around Couchville Lake during the spring and summer months.



Yet another species, the American Toad, is occasionally heard at Long Hunter. It's similar in appearance to the Fowler's Toad but has one or two warts per black spot, while the Fowler's Toad has three or more. Also, the American Toad has cranial crests that do not touch the parotoid glands as they do with the Fowler's Toad. Although their call (an extended trill lasting up to 20 seconds) is heard here infrequently, they are heard in large numbers in other areas of Middle Tennessee.

These are by no means the only frog species you'll hear and see at Long Hunter, but these are the ones we proudly call our "park regulars."

Brochure created by Jason Allen



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