



BCT Stewardship Journal: May 2025

Gray Treefrogs: Color-Changing Cannibals

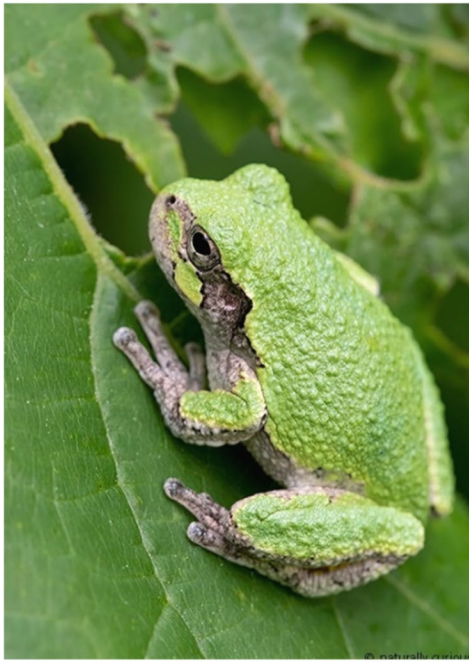
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Dryophytes versicolor, commonly known as the Gray Treefrog, is aptly named for its ability to change color according to its environment. While they may appear to be mottled gray, these frogs possess the remarkable capability to shift between shades of green, brown, and everything in between, aiding in their ability to camouflage themselves in the forest floor and canopy. While females are larger than males, the frogs have an average size of 1.5 to 2 inches.

Despite their inconspicuous appearance, Gray Treefrogs sport vivid orange or yellow hues on their bellies and the undersides of their legs. Their diet includes insect larvae, spiders, mites, plant lice, ants, and beetles. Gray Treefrogs are opportunistic, which is a polite scientific term to imply they can eat other frogs. After all, it's a frog-eat-frog world in our dynamic forest and pond ecosystems!



Adult Gray Treefrog blending into its environment



Vibrant green back of a young Gray Treefrog.

Juvenile Gray Treefrogs display a vibrant green hue, blending seamlessly with sunlit foliage. Eventually, this youthful coloration transforms into the mottled gray skin of adulthood. Gray Treefrogs seek habitats with nearby water sources and tall trees that offer protection from ground predators.

Gray Treefrogs boast an impressive lifespan, often reaching up to 9 years, far surpassing that of Wood Frogs. Breeding occurs between April and August, during which females select mates based on vocalizations. Around 2,000 eggs are laid by each female, typically in groups of 10 to 40 eggs. After 4 or 5 days, these eggs hatch into tadpoles.

These adaptable frogs are found in environments like pine barrens and deciduous woodlands, making the Cape Cod the perfect home for them. An excellent site to observe these frogs is BCT's No Bottom Pond trail. This unique hike offers a couple of foot paths ending at the water's edge. These lookouts offer a great lookout to potentially spot spawning Gray Treefrogs in early Spring and if you are lucky, tadpoles and juvenile frogs towards the end of Summer.

Remember to follow Leave No Trace policies to keep our frogs and trails safe!