

THE SPRING CHORUS

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One of the joys of spring are the songs and sounds of our wildlife. The cardinals start singing in the early morning as soon as January or February. Returning to our wetlands, the red-winged blackbirds and sandhill cranes make their familiar calls. But what is most surprising are the frogs calling from the wetlands in our first mild days in March and April. Somehow emerging from that still icy water, they manage to produce a full chorus. Driving along the south section of Broadway on a mild day in March, open your car window and listen to the concert of the western chorus frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata*) and spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*).



The western chorus frog and the spring peeper seldom exceed an inch in length, so though they are easy to hear, they are difficult to locate. If you should be lucky enough to spot one of these tiny frogs, the spring peeper has a dark “X” marking its back. The western chorus frog has stripes running down its back and sides. You can tell by their Latin or scientific names that these two species are close cousins, both being called “*Pseudacris*.”



These diminutive creatures make up for their size in the volume of their chorus. The western chorus frog is easier to distinguish from the spring peeper. Its call resembles the sound of dragging your finger along the teeth of a plastic comb. The spring peeper makes a high-pitched, bird-like “peep” but usually there are so many of them calling at the same time, that it is hard to distinguish the call of a single frog.

Both prefer habitats with standing water and small ponds for breeding (where no fish are present to eat them up).

Next time you drive down Broadway between Highway 12 and Beverly Drive, or along portions of East Beverly Drive, especially on a sunny and mild day, open your windows, and enjoy the chorus.
