



An Observation of Arboreal Behavior in a Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*)

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Photograph by the second author.

Spring Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) are small frogs that inhabit deciduous woodlands throughout the eastern United States and southeastern Canada (Dodd 2013). Outside of the breeding season, *P. crucifer* is uncommonly encountered, but when observed is typically within or among terrestrial debris such as leaf litter, stumps, downed logs, and other woody debris (Carr 1940; Hulse et al. 2001; Dodd 2013). On 10 June 2014 at approximately 1500 h, we observed an adult *P. crucifer* ascend a large deciduous tree (Fig. 1) in Caledonia State Park, Franklin Co., Pennsylvania, USA (39.909453°N, 77.473188°W; WGS 84). We initially noted the *P. crucifer* on the base of a large tree approximately 15 cm above the ground along a hiking trail in mixed-deciduous forest. We observed and photographed the frog for approximately 5 min, during which it climbed from its initial position on the base of the tree to a height of approximately 3 m above the ground.

When foraging, *Pseudacris crucifer* will often ascend herbaceous vegetation and low-lying woody shrubs (McAlister 1963; Hulse et al. 2001; Dodd 2013). However, in their synthesis of the natural history of the herpetofauna of Pennsylvania and the northeastern United States, Hulse et al. (2001) remarked that this species appears to avoid climbing trees. Thus, our observation struck us as unusual and prompted us to review the literature regarding arboreal behavior in *P. crucifer*. Carr (1940) reported finding *P. crucifer* estivating under bark and in knotholes in Florida, suggesting arboreal behavior (Dodd 2013). Additionally, Ashton and Ashton (1988) and Dodd (2004, 2013) noted *P. crucifer* in trees or calling from forest canopies in the late summer or early fall in the southeastern United States.

So, our observation of *Pseudacris crucifer* climbing a tree does not appear to be particularly unusual, although it is the first published report of arboreal behavior in *P. crucifer* from Pennsylvania. Numerous authors (e.g., McAlister 1963; Conant and Collins 1998; Hulse et al. 2001; Dodd

2013) have noted that *P. crucifer* is cryptic and infrequently observed outside of the breeding season. Consequently, in hindsight, Hulse et al. (2001) might have stated that arboreality in *P. crucifer* appears to be rare due to the paucity of observations of this species outside of the breeding season.

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Fig. 1. Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*) ascending a tree in Caledonia State Park, Franklin Co., Pennsylvania.

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