

GEHR Watershed Minute #39

Pine Barrens Tree Frog: (248 words)

The Pine Barrens Tree Frog is a hall mark species for the natural values of the New Jersey Pine Barrens. This small and colorful frog is found in only two other places on the planet, the Sandhills of North and South Carolina and the Florida Panhandle.

At only about 1 to 3 inches long, the Pine Barrens Tree Frog is one of the smaller species of tree frogs in the watershed. It is predominantly light green in color, with a white-bordered lavender stripe on each side of the body and spotted orange-gold markings on the inner surfaces of its legs.

While they spend most of their lives in the floor of upland forests near seasonal ponds, they actively breed in open canopy sphagnum bogs and shrub-scrub vernal ponds from May to July. Males are well adapted to climbing up into pine trees and high bush blueberries at breeding ponds where they call loudly with a goose like wonking sound to attract female frogs to mate.

Adult Pine Barrens Tree Frogs are predatory and catch flies, small slugs, snails, beetles, butterflies or moths with their tongue. In the larval or tadpole stage tree frogs eat vegetation or algae in the water.

Due to pressure from habitat loss, water pollution and ground water depletion from over development, the Pine Barrens Tree Frog is listed as a threatened species. However, there are still numerous populations that can be heard throughout the forested wetlands in our watershed on warm and humid nights.