

Help!

Treefrogs are breeding in my swimming pool!



The temperatures have warmed up, the snow is gone and the songs of frogs and insects have started to fill the night. It is finally spring time in Pennsylvania. For many, hearing the call of our frogs is about all they will ever experience. For others, more specifically swimming

pool owners in the more remote parts of the state, it can sometimes feel like a constant battle to keep their pools tadpole free. I would like to take this opportunity to speak to those who deal with the gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*).

I would like to think you came across this document in an effort to find ways of dealing with the frogs without harming them or their reproductive cycle. If that is the case, congratulations, you have found what you seek.

Encourage good behavior, Discourage the bad:

There are a few good ways to discourage the gray treefrog from breeding in your above ground pool, but for the sake of protecting these frogs, you should always try to provide an



alternative. If your immediate area happens to have many vernal pools, which are temporary ponds that fill up with water from the melting of snow and the spring rains, you may not need to provide new breeding grounds.

Ways to make breeding grounds:

- Build a small pond but do not stock it with fish.
- Place a baby pool outside with a few inches of water in it. When the tadpoles hatch they will eat the mosquito larva. To discourage mosquitoes, do not place the swimming pool out in advance of breeding season. Breeding of gray treefrogs can occur from late April to August.

• I have also had success by collecting the breeding frogs and putting them in a closed (with air holes) container full of water over night, ensuring all the eggs are laid in that container.

Ways to discourage breeding in your pool:

- On rainy nights, or nights when you hear the frogs calling, turn on your filter. The movement of the water discourages breeding.
- Physically moving straggler frogs to your baby pool or other appropriate area may help.
- Leaving a solar cover on the pool at night can help reduce breeding activity and also keep your water warm.

- Remember, male frogs start calling at the edge of what they consider appropriate breeding places. Then the females move in.

It's too late! They have already laid their eggs or the tadpoles are already in my pool.



Sometimes, it is too late. You may already have tadpoles by the time you open your winter cover. Fear not, they are not hard to take care of. Here are some things you can do to get them out of your pool without killing them.

- Eggs can be removed with a pool skimmer net and gently moved off into your baby pool or other container. I have successfully used large Tupperware storage containers as well as old aquariums. Baby pools are still optimal.

- Do not put the eggs directly into natural bodies of water such as vernal pools. We do not want to contaminate those areas with chlorine or other pool chemicals.

- Do not pack too many eggs into one small container. Plastic Tupperware is cheap and can hold many.

- Tadpoles can be caught with a little effort using aquarium nets or even the pool skimmer net. Then they should be moved directly into the new container which is already prepared with water in it.

- Recruit some help. Children will find it fun and fascinating to catch the tadpoles as they swim around \ them and then watch them as they grow.

- Eggs will typically hatch into tadpoles in about 5 or 6 days. The tadpoles will start looking like little frogs within a couple months. If you leave your containers mostly open, when the frogs are ready they will be able to climb out on their own and hop away. Be aware of predators that may be feeding on your tadpole containers at night, especially feral cats.

- The tadpoles will feed on bugs that fall into the water and mosquito larva if they had time to develop before the eggs hatched. If you have many tadpoles, you can feed them once or twice a day. I had success with feeding my tadpoles flaked fish food. Do not over

feed them, however because if the food doesn't get eaten, the water can spoil and the tadpoles will die. If you notice the water changing color significantly or a strong and unusual odor, you should change the water. Try, if you can, to use water approximately the same temperature as the water you are replacing so you do not shock the tadpoles.

- Keep the containers out of direct sunlight, and be careful not to contaminate the water with chemicals (ex: pesticides on leaves)

Benefits of Gray Treefrogs:

- They reduce the insect population. More frogs equals less insects, which is great around swimming pools!

- Their call can be soothing to listen to.

- Tadpoles will help prevent mosquito larva from developing.

- They are very pretty, change color, and usually tolerate light handling. This can be great for teaching children.

Gray Treefrogs in Captivity:

- Gray treefrogs are wild animals and do not make good pets. They should be left outdoors.

- Your tadpoles' containers, likewise, should be kept outdoors.

- Pennsylvania law states that you may only have 15 eggs or 15 tadpoles in captivity at a time. By keeping the containers outside you are merely making new habitat for the tadpoles which otherwise would have died as a result of your pool filter and chemicals.

- Be sure to follow related state or local laws as they pertain to your situation. PA State Law regarding reptiles and amphibians can be found at this website:

<http://www.fish.state.pa.us/fishpub/summary/repamp.html>

I can be reached by email at jeffslawson@gmail.com if you would like to discuss more about the gray treefrogs you find on your property. I also would love to hear from you if you found this document useful. Good luck and happy frog raising.