

Committee on State and Local Government
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

February 3, 2025

RE: LD 73, An Act to Designate the Spring Peeper as the Official State Amphibian

Dear Chair Baldacci, Chair Salisbury, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee:

My name is Ania Wright and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation nonprofit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 72, *An Act to Designate the Spring Peeper as the Official State Amphibian*.

Though the Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*) is Maine's smallest frog, its reputation is larger than life. The peeper's calls are beloved across Maine as a welcome sign of spring. As we speak, these tiny creatures are hibernating under logs, in the soft mud near ponds and vernal pools, and below leaf litter and tree barks. As temperatures begin to warm in early April we will begin to hear the male's high pitched breeding calls which can be heard from up to half a mile away.

Maine Audubon is a participant in ‘Maine Big Night,’ a nonprofit community science project that aims to reduce the number of road kills of amphibians like the Spring Peeper on their most active nights of the year.¹ A ‘Big Night’ refers to an evening when many amphibian species migrate from their winter hibernation habitat to their spring breeding habitat, which often includes road crossings in developed areas. Volunteers can borrow Big Night ‘kits’ from Maine Audubon's Gilsland Farm and Fields Pond locations, which include species ID cards, headlamps, safety vests, and clipboards, to monitor the numbers and species of amphibians making their journey on a Big Night. This joyful community science project demonstrates the dedication of Mainers to amphibians, and designating an official state amphibian will help honor the work of these dedicated volunteers.

¹ More information on Maine Big Night can be found at mainebignight.org

Establishing an official state amphibian is also a great opportunity to highlight the importance of species like the Spring Peeper as indicator species in our ecosystems. Indicator species are exceptionally sensitive to the stability of their surroundings. They thrive in healthy forest, pond, and vernal pool environments, but some of those habitats are being rapidly lost to development, degraded by pollutants, or altered by extreme precipitation and drought events associated with a warming climate. Spring Peepers and other amphibians are particularly sensitive to pollutants as they can easily absorb chemicals and toxins through their skin. As we continue to navigate growing impacts to amphibian habitats statewide such as toxic runoff from, loss of vernal pools, and changes to our environment caused by climate change, designating a state amphibian helps to call attention to the threats that amphibians face in Maine.

It is our hope that by the time these mighty amphibians awake in the spring, they will be honored with the designation of state amphibian. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Policy Advocate



Spring Peeper. Photo by Ariana van den Akker, August 2023