Species Status Assessment

Common Name: Eastern (Northern) cricket frog **Date Updated:** January 3, 2025

Scientific Name: *Acris crepitans* **Updated By:** L. Masi

Class: Amphibia

Family: Hylidae

Species Synopsis *(a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York):*

The range of the eastern cricket frog (*A. crepitans*) spans the eastern half of the United States, from southeastern New York and Pennsylvania southward through the panhandle of western Florida (IUCN 2022). Its distribution is east of the Mississippi River and south of the Ohio River (Gamble et al. 2008). Formerly known as the northern cricket frog, the nomenclature was updated to eastern cricket frog in 2012 (Frost et al. 2012). Three subspecies have traditionally been recognized: Blanchard's cricket frog (*A. c. blanchardi*) in the west and Midwest (including extirpated populations in southern Ontario), eastern cricket frog (*A. c. crepitans)* in the east (including New York), and coastal cricket frog (*A. c. paludicola)* along the Gulf Coast (Figure 1). However, more recent genetic studies, which revised the distributions of *blanchardi* and *crepitans* in the south-central part of their combined ranges, suggest *A. blanchardi* and *A. crepitans* should be recognized as distinct species (Gamble et al. 2008). This taxonomic revision has been adopted by Frost (2020), Collins and Taggart (2009), and Crother (2017). Furthermore, Gamble et al. (2008) concluded that *A. c. paludicola* is nested within *A. c. blanchardi* and does not warrant subspecific status, a finding that is consistent with the mtDNA analysis by Rose et al. (2006).

Cricket frogs are generally considered common within their range; however, significant declines have been observed at the northern fringes of their distribution, including in New York. Despite numerous reports of declines, and ample scientific literature on the biology of eastern cricket frogs, there is no clear-cut indication of the cause(s) of this declining trend, although several anthropogenic factors and environmental conditions have been suggested. Populations in the central regions of their distribution appear to be stable (IUCN 2022, NatureServe 2025).

Cricket frogs are found along the vegetated shorelines of lakes, bogs, ponds, vernal pools and extensive marshes. They also use upland forests during the spring and fall for hibernation. Where it occurs in the lower Hudson Valley of New York, this tiny frog is at the northern extent of its range in the East; it has been extirpated from Long Island and Staten Island. By 2014, only seven sites within four metapopulations remained in the lower Hudson Valley, representing a decline of approximately 30% over a 20-year period (1994 to 2014). Severe declines were also documented in Pennsylvania during this time, prompting both states to list the cricket frog as endangered. Since 2014, the eastern cricket frog has been rediscovered in the fifth metapopulation complex in the Hudson Valley, and since 2020 frogs have been detected at 12 sites.

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

i. Federal: Not Listed **Candidate:** No

ii. New York: Endangered; HPSGCN

b. Natural Heritage Program

i. **Global:** G5

ii. **New York:** S1 **Tracked by NYNHP?:** Yes

Other Ranks:

-IUCN Red List: Least Concern
-COSEWIC: N/A
-Northeast Regional SGCN List (2023): Not listed
-NEPARC Regional List (2010): High Concern

Status Discussion:

The eastern cricket frog was first listed as threatened in New York in 1983 and revised to endangered status in 1999. It was listed as endangered in Pennsylvania in 2010 due to its extirpation from 37 of 43 known locations, and in New Jersey, it is listed as a species of special concern. Northeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) (2010) lists the eastern cricket frog as a Species of High Concern, as it is included in the Wildlife Action Plans of more than 50% of northeastern states.

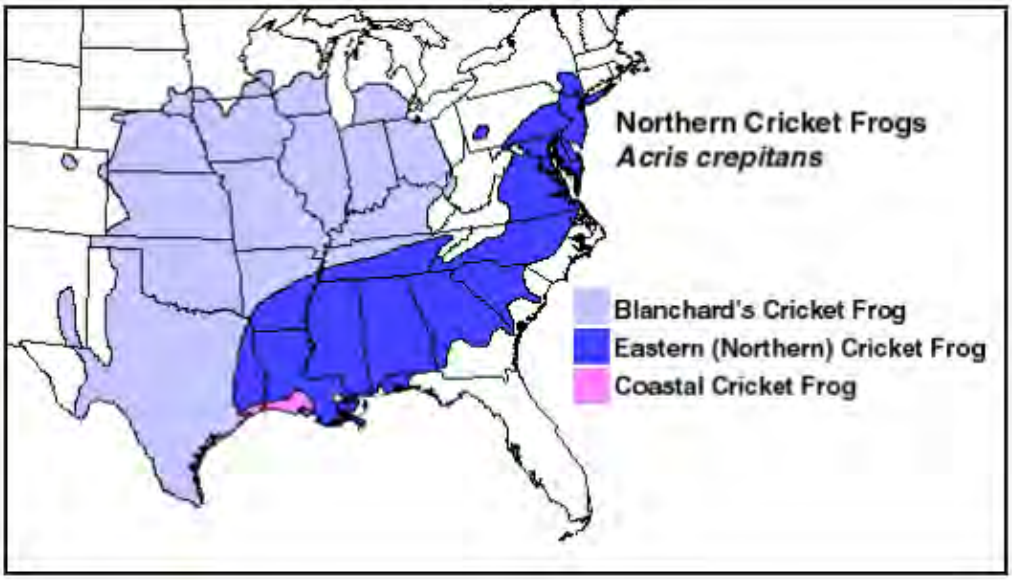

Figure 1. Eastern (Northern) Cricket Frog Distribution (USGS 2018)

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status	SGCN?
North America	Yes	Stable	Stable	Last 20 years	Not Listed	
Northeastern US	Yes	Declining	Declining	Last 20 years		No
New York	Yes	Declining	Declining	Since 1990s	Endangered	Yes

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status	SGCN?
Connecticut	No	N/A	N/A			
Massachusetts	No	N/A	N/A			
New Jersey	Yes	Declining	Stable		Special Concern	Yes
Pennsylvania	Yes	Declining	Declining	Since 1983	Endangered	Yes
Vermont	No	N/A	N/A			
Ontario	No	Extirpated	Extirpated		Extirpated	
Quebec	No	N/A	N/A			

Column options
Present?: Yes; No; Unknown; No data; (blank) or Choose an Item
Abundance and Distribution: Declining; Increasing; Stable; Unknown; Extirpated; N/A; (blank) or Choose an item
SGCN?: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Monitoring in New York*:*

The NY Amphibian and Reptile Atlas (Herp Atlas) distribution mapping project was conducted in 1990-1999. The Herp Atlas database also includes historic records from prior to 1990; these records are primarily a compilation of museum records and researchers' field notes. This species is also tracked by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP).

Since 2009, State Wildlife Grants have funded work on the eastern cricket frog in DEC's Region 3. DEC staff have undertaken a number of efforts, including call surveys at known and potential sites, efforts to evaluate seasonal habitat use, and investigations into possible reintroduction strategies for the species. Data from these efforts are shared with the NYNHP. Since the species is protected, additional survey work takes place during regulatory review, providing an additional data source.

Trends Discussion*:*

Eastern cricket frog populations in the core of the species' range appear to be robust and stable (Davis et al. 1998, Hemesath 1998, Gray and Brown 2005). However, declines have been documented in peripheral populations at the margins of the species' distribution. In Pennsylvania, the species was listed as endangered in 2010 following a precipitous decline documented since the early 1980s. The cricket frog has been extirpated from 92% of its historic (pre-1983) locations, and of the six locations discovered since 1983, three have been extirpated (Pennsylvania Bulletin, 2010). Populations of Blanchard's cricket frog occurred historically in extreme southern Ontario at Point Pelee Peninsula and Point Pelee Island in Lake Ontario, but have been extirpated from these locations (Oldham 1992).

In New York, the distribution of eastern cricket frogs has historically been limited to the lower Hudson Valley, as well as Richmond and Suffolk counties (Gibbs et al. 2007, New York Natural Heritage Program 2010, Kenney and Stearns 2015). Cricket frogs were extirpated from Suffolk County by the 1930s and from Richmond County by the 1970s (Gibbs et al. 2007). Repeated surveys conducted at known populations have documented declines in within the state (Kenney and Stearns 2015).

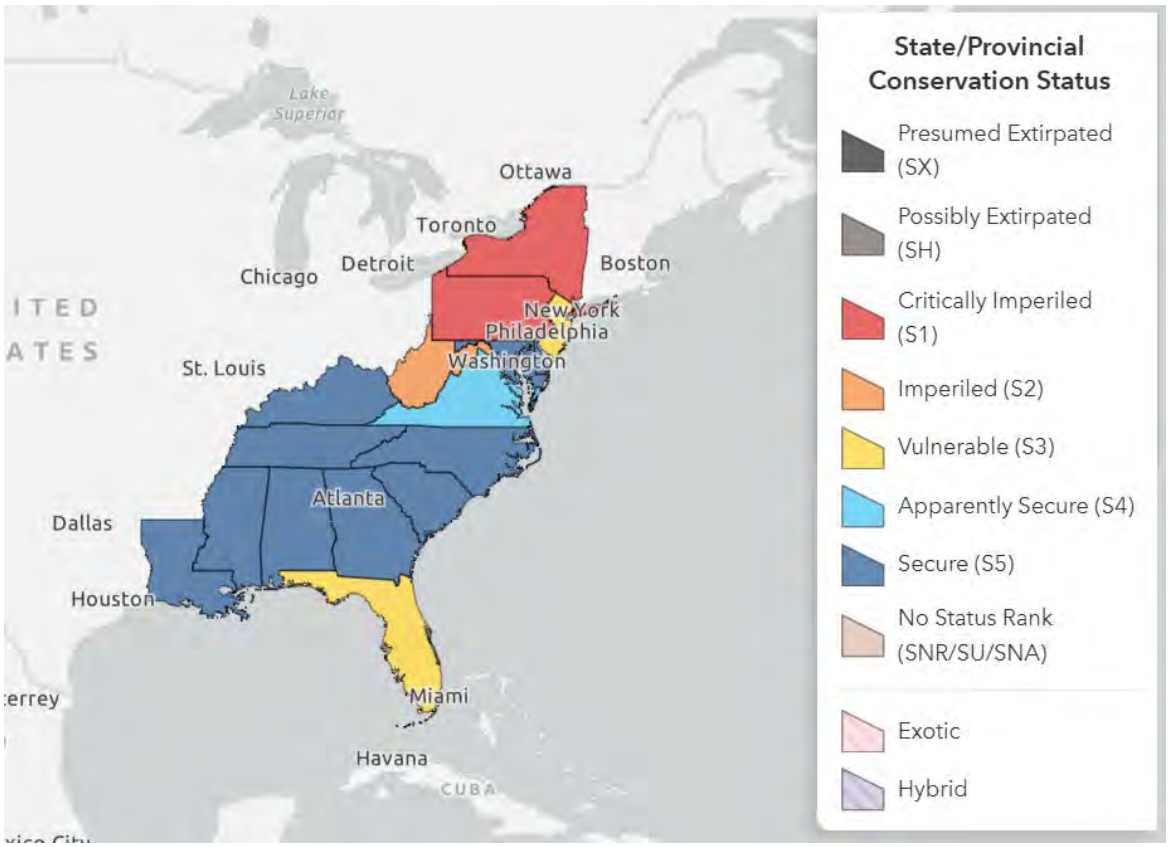

Figure 2. Status of eastern cricket frog in North America (NatureServe 2025)

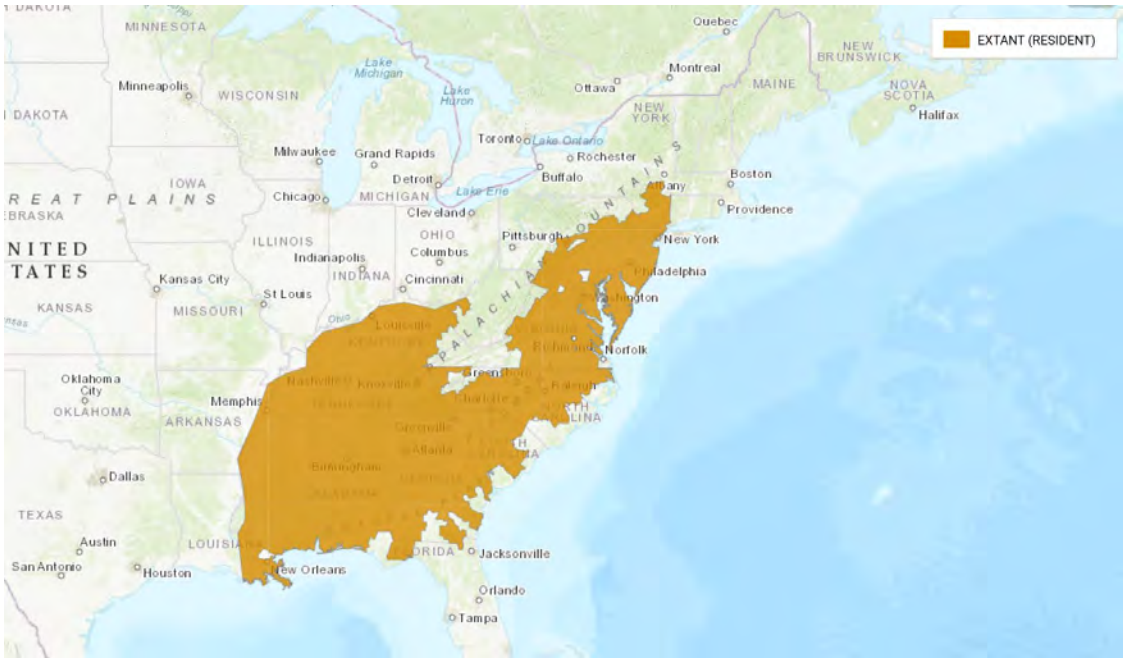

Figure 3. Eastern Cricket Frog range map (IUCN 2022)

III. New York Rarity

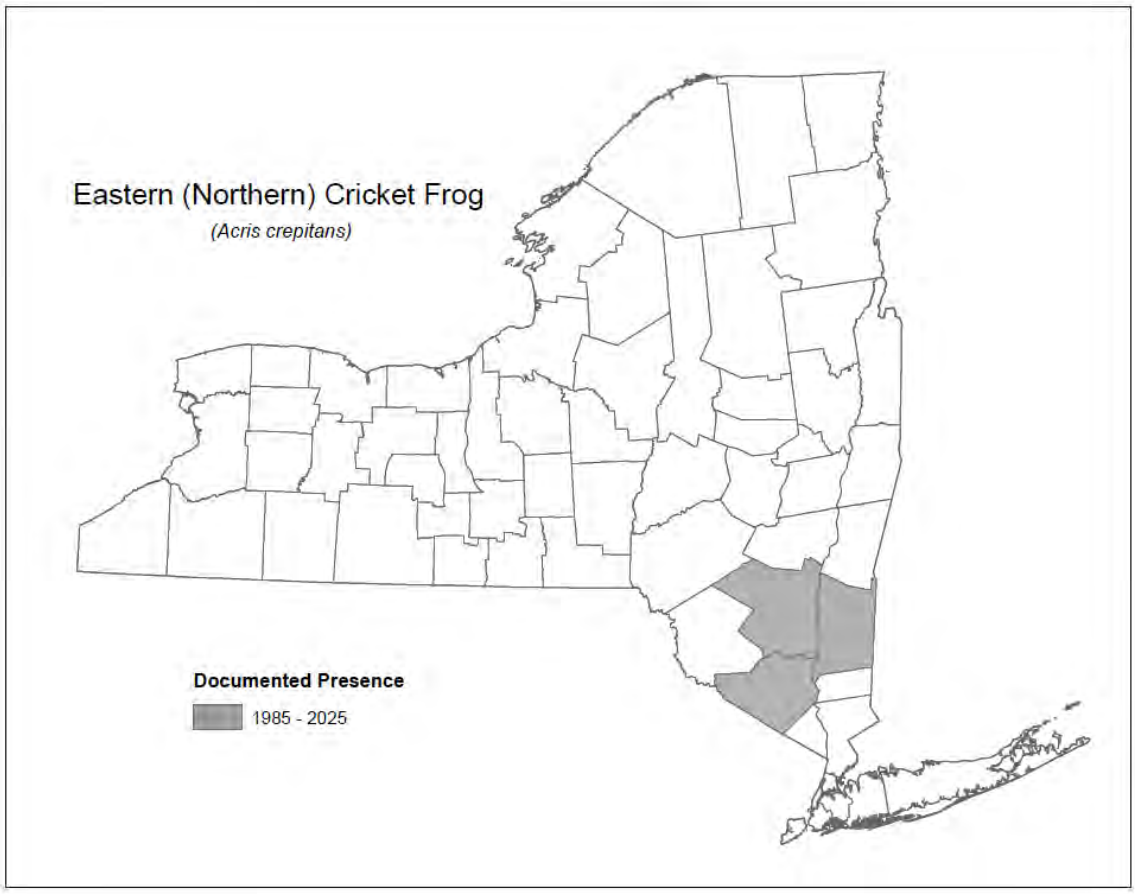

Figure 4. Recent observations of eastern cricket frog (*Acris crepitans*) in New York, 1985-2025.

Years	# of Records	% of State
Pre-1990	26	
1990-1999		
2000 - 2015	7	
2016 - 2023	12	

Table 1. Records of eastern cricket frog in New York. Records represent known occupied sites.

Details of historical and current occurrence:

Eastern cricket frogs have been historically limited to the lower Hudson Valley, Long Island, and Staten Island. The species was extirpated from Long Island by the 1930s and from Staten Island by the 1970s.

In the 1990s, eastern cricket frogs were documented from 26 distinct sites in New York, likely representing individuals from five remaining metapopulations. The majority of these sites (22 sites)

were resurveyed during the breeding seasons of 2009-2011, and cricket frogs were only detected at seven of them (Kenney and Stearns 2015). By 2014, these seven sites – located in Dutchess, Orange, and Ulster counties (Figure 3) – likely represented frogs from only four remaining metapopulations in New York.

Since the last species status assessment, eastern cricket frogs have been rediscovered in the fifth metapopulation in Ulster County, and frogs have been detected at 12 of 28 surveyed sites since 2020. Also, since 2015, nine new sites have been identified, all of which are within the five known metapopulations and within 1.5 miles of previously documented locations. While these findings may seem promising, several other known records have not been re-detected in this timeframe, giving further credence that the species acts as a true metapopulation.

New York's Contribution to Species North American Range:

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%	Peripheral	

Column options
Percent of North American Range in NY: 100% (endemic); 76-99%; 51-75%; 26-50%; 1-25%; 0%; Choose an item
Classification of NY Range: Core; Peripheral; Disjunct; (blank) or Choose an item

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type *(from NY crosswalk of NE Aquatic, Marine, or Terrestrial Habitat Classification Systems):*

a. Floodplain Forest
b. Hardwood Swamp
c. Freshwater Marsh
d. Eutrophic Pond
e. Farm Pond/Artificial Pond
f. Bog Lake

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York

Habitat Specialist?	Indicator Species?	Habitat/ Community Trend	Time frame of Decline/Increase
No	No	Declining	Wetlands decline since 1970s

Column options
Habitat Specialist and Indicator Species: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item
Habitat/Community Trend: Declining; Stable; Increasing; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Habitat Discussion:

Breeding occurs in almost any permanent freshwater body, including lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, although large or polluted water bodies are generally avoided (Kenney and Stearns 2015). Preferred breeding areas typically feature shallow water, floating mats of aquatic vegetation, sloping muddy or sandy banks, limited canopy cover, and at least some surrounding forest. Submerged aquatic plants provide both egg deposition sites, as well as protective cover for tadpoles. While cricket frogs appear to favor sunny, open-canopy fresh water habitats, they are also known to occur

in habitats with dense vegetative cover, including cattail marshes and red maple swamps. In New York, calling males have been documented in man-made irrigation ponds within apple orchards.

Adult cricket frogs frequently move between water bodies, with documented movements of up to 1.3km between ponds. After rain events, cricket frogs may move away from water bodies. In New York, studies marking individual frogs have documented movements ranging from 300 to 515 meters from breeding ponds (G. Kenney, personal communication). In the fall, cricket frogs seek over-wintering sites (hibernacula) that provide protection from freezing temperatures, with peak fall migration typically occurring from late September through late October. Over-wintering may be located near or adjacent to summer habitats in riparian sites (e.g. crayfish burrows or deep cracks in the soil along the shoreline) or at terrestrial sites (e.g. beneath logs or matted vegetation in upland forests), that may require long migrations from their summer habitat.

V. Species Demographics and Life History:

Breeder in NY?	Non-breeder in NY?	Migratory Only?	Summer Resident?	Winter Resident?	Anadromous/ Catadromous?
Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes	-

Column options
First 5 fields: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item
Anadromous/Catadromous: Anadromous; Catadromous; (blank) or Choose an item

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion *(include information about species life span, reproductive longevity, reproductive capacity, age to maturity, and ability to disperse and colonize):*

Eastern cricket frogs emerge in late March or early April, and breed from mid-May to mid-July (Gibbs et al. 2007). Breeding occurs in shallow water, where females lay 200-400 eggs, singly or in small clusters of fewer than twelve. The eggs hatch quickly, in just 3 to 4 days, and in New York, metamorphosis typically occurs in July or August, but can vary depending on the date of breeding (Kenney and Stearns, 2015).

Cricket frogs are preyed upon by a variety of predators, including aquatic spiders, bullfrogs, fish, snakes, turtles, birds, and mammals (Burkett 1984, Perrill and Magier 1988, Gray and Brown 2005). Largely due to heavy predation, cricket frog populations often experience a sharp decline between metamorphosis and the next breeding season (Gray 1983, Burkett 1984, Gray and Brown 2005). Consequently, their mean life expectancy is about 4 months, and individuals born the previous year are largely eliminated from the population by October (Gray 1983, Burkett 1984, O'Neill 2001, Gray and Brown 2005). Occasionally, adults survive to a second breeding season (Gray 1983).

Eastern cricket frog populations function on a metapopulation level, with smaller, adjacent populations interacting through connected habitats.

VI. Threats *:*

The decline of cricket frog populations is not fully understood, but several potential factors have been proposed as contributing causes, including habitat loss and degradation, chemical pollutants, non-native species, pathogens, climate change, and ultraviolet radiation (Kenney and Stearns 2015).

Habitat loss is likely the most significant threat to eastern cricket frogs in New York. Their complex habitat requirements, which include both semi-permanent wetlands and forested uplands, make them particularly vulnerable to habitat changes. Residential and commercial development pressure in the three counties where cricket frogs occur is especially high. The reasons for the extirpation of the Blanchard's Cricket Frog in Ontario are unknown; however, threats including, dyked and drained wetlands; development; flooding; dredging of drainage canals; invasive species (common reed and carp); use of fertilizers and pesticides, predation by bullfrogs; and road mortality, are believed to have contributed to declines (Cook 1984, Oldham and Campbell 1990, Environment Canada 2010). At one site in Ontario, natural flooding during the winter of 1972 was thought to have caused the disappearance of the cricket frog population.

Forest management practices , such as logging, may have the potential to kill cricket frogs in their hibernacula. Poor sediment management following removal of trees can result in degradation of water quality in breeding areas (Kenney and Stearns 2015).

Populations that are in close proximity to roads face road mortality as individuals travel between breeding areas to upland habitats. Additionally, use of ATVs in forested uplands can also cause mortality, since cricket frogs are known to use water pooled in tire tracks.

The management of aquatic plants in breeding habitats poses another significant threat to the persistence of this species. Cricket frogs are dependent upon aquatic vegetation for breeding, egg laying and tadpole development. Non-native grass carp may decimate or drastically reduce aquatic vegetation in breeding ponds, while milfoil moths (*Acentria ephemerella*) and milfoil weevils (*Euhrychiopsis lecontei*) may effectively reduce invasive vegetation and improve habitat for native plants. Chemicals used to control aquatic vegetation and algal blooms may negatively affect cricket frogs as well (Kenney and Stearns 2015).

Increased levels of ultraviolet radiation from depletion of the ozone layer may be affecting amphibian populations worldwide (Blaustein et al. 1998), and the eastern cricket frog was classified as "moderately vulnerable" to predicted climate change in an assessment of vulnerability conducted by the New York Natural Heritage Program (Schlesinger et al. 2011).

The chytrid fungus, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (*Bd*), first described in 1998 (Longcore et al. 1999), has become a disease of global concern, with a recent study finding *Bd*-infection in 72% of sampled countries and in 1062 of 1966 (54%) of amphibian species tested (Monzon et al. 2020).

The distance between metapopulations has led to minimal connectivity and substantial genetic differentiation in remaining extant populations. Additional threats for loss of genetic variation are still a concern. (Edwards 2023).

Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Spatial Extent*	Severity*	Immediacy*	Trend	Certainty
1. Residential and Commercial	1.1 Housing & Urban Areas	Choose an item. (habitat loss/degradation)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.1 Roads & Railroads	4.1.1 Roads (road mortality)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
5. Biological Resource Use	5.3 Logging & Wood Harvesting	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
6. Human Intrusions & Disturbance	6.1 Recreational Activities	6.1.1 Motor vehicles (ATV)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
8. Invasive & Other Problematic Species	8.1 Invasive Non-Native Plants & Animals	8.1.4 Aquatic plants (aquatic vegetation control via grass carp, chemical)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
8. Invasive & Other Problematic Species	8.4 Pathogens	8.4.2 Viral pathogens (ranavirus)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.1 Domestic & Urban Wastewater	9.1.2 Runoff (household/lawn care and road salt)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.3 Agricultural & Forestry Effluents	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.3 Changes in Temperature Regimes	11.3.4 Increase in temperature fluctuations	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.4 Changes in Precipitation & Hydrological Regimes	11.4.2 Droughts	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Table 2. Threats to eastern cricket frog.

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes: ✓ **No:** _____ **Unknown:** _____

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

The eastern cricket frog is listed as an endangered species in New York and is protected by Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) section 11-0535 and the New York Code of Rules and Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 182). A permit is required for any proposed project or action that may result in a take of a species listed as Threatened or Endangered, including, but not limited to, actions that may kill or harm individual animals or result in the adverse modification, degradation or destruction of habitat occupied by the listed species.

In 2006, the State of New York adopted legislation (ECL section 11-0107 sub 2) that gave all native frogs, turtles, snakes, lizards and salamanders legal protection as game species, with very few open to harvest. The legislation also outlaws the sale of any native species of herpetofauna regardless of its origin.

Under Article 24 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law, the Freshwater Wetlands Act provides protection to wetlands greater than 12.4 acres in size and smaller wetlands of 'Unusual Importance'. Beginning in 2028, the default size threshold of regulated wetlands will decrease to 7.4 acres. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also protects wetlands, irrespective of size, under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The Protection of Waters Program provides protection for rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds under Article 15 of the NYS ECL.

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

This species would benefit from wetland restoration. Management actions are detailed in the species recovery plan (Kenney and Stearns 2015).

Cricket frogs likely function at a metapopulation scale in which the habitats of localized extirpations are re-colonized from nearby populations when conditions are again favorable. A metapopulation can persist for long periods of time as long as dispersing individuals can move between sites through suitable habitat. While localized extirpations may be caused by a variety of reasons, the key to long-term sustainable populations is to maintain the habitat connections between sites of suitable cricket frog habitat (Kenney and Stearns 2015).

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (NYSDEC 2015) includes recommendations for the following actions for freshwater wetland amphibians, which includes eastern cricket frog. These actions continue to be essential for the conservation of this species. Actions that have been accomplished, or where progress has been made, are denoted with a check.

Easement acquisition:

____ Secure habitats critical to species survival by acquisition of conservation easements, or by other land protection mechanisms.

Habitat management:

____ Manage the variety of factors which might be limiting wetland habitat suitability for resident amphibian species, including management of exotic plant and animal species, management of

adverse hydrological alterations, and management of anthropogenic inputs of sediments and toxicants.

Habitat research:

✓ Develop standardized habitat survey protocols, and implement survey protocols at all known and potentially suitable sites, to document the character, quality and extent of occupied habitat.

Life history research:

✓ Document life history parameters specific to New York populations of the species, including age and sex ratios, longevity, age at sexual maturity, survivorship of young, predator-prey relationships, and wetland/upland habitat requirements.

Modify regulation:

✓ Modify Freshwater Wetlands Act, in order to protect wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres where they support species of conservation concern, and in order to expand the protected upland buffer beyond the 100-foot limit where necessary.

Other action:

✓ Periodically evaluate status of the subject species to determine whether appropriate E/T/SC status listings are in effect.

Population enhancement:

____ Employ restoration techniques for the cricket frog at selected sites as needed, including captive breeding and repatriation/relocation strategies.

Population monitoring:

✓ Conduct periodic surveys of known sites of species occurrence, in order to detect population trends.

Statewide baseline survey:

✓ Develop standardized population survey protocols, and implement protocols at all known and potentially suitable sites to document the extent of occupied habitat.

Complete Conservation Actions table using IUCN conservation actions taxonomy at link below. Use headings 1-6 for Action Category (e.g., Land/Water Protection) and associated subcategories for Action (e.g., Site/Area Protection) - https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/conservation-actions-classification-scheme

Action Category	Action	Description
A.1 Direct Habitat Management	A.1.0.0.0 Direct Habitat Management	Site/Area management
A.2 Direct Species Management	A.2.0.0.0 Direct Species Management	Invasive/problematic species control
A.2 Direct Species Management	A.2.0.0.0 Direct Species Management	Species Recovery

Action Category	Action	Description
A.2 Direct Species Management	A.2.2.1.0 Reintroduce species	
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.0.0.0 Design and plan conservation	Site/area and resource/habitat protection
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.1.3 Develop a conservation, management, or restoration plan for protected private lands	Habitat and natural process restoration
C.7 Legislative and Regulatory Framework or Tools	C.7.1.2.0 Create, amend, or influence legislation	Legislation

Table 3. Recommended conservation actions for eastern cricket frog.

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