Late Season Chorusing by Blanchard’s Cricket Frogs

Acris blanchardi (=crepitans blanchardi) has been reported active in Kansas as late as 14 November and between air temperatures of 42°-100°F (Burkett 1984, Clarke 1958, Collins et al. 2010). However, chorusing has only been reported during more restricted seasons (Clarke 1958). Though chorusing in the species typically is associated with breeding, and in Texas and Louisiana may occur during any month (Bayless 1969, Blair 1961), Collins et al. (2010) note that in Kansas “chorusing does not always indicate breeding activity.” They do not mention observed calling dates outside the normal Kansas breeding season.

On Monday 4 November 2013 at 11 AM CST, PAP heard a small (5-7 males) chorus of Acris blanchardi calling from a steel culvert beneath a rural driveway (Lat 38.796653, long -95.332731, elev 1070ft). Water accumulation in the culvert was <2cm. The site is approximately 50m from a pond used by the species. Air temperature at the site was 14.5°C (58°F). Humidity was 71%, dew point 49°F, barometer 29.91 and rising (Weather Underground http://www.wunderground.com/weatherstation/WXDailyHistory.asp?ID=KKSBLD7W5 &month=11&day=4&year=2013) through late morning. The preceding two days were sunny with high temperatures of 60°-62°F. Saenz et al. (2006) found that Acris crepitans calling associated with breeding was more influenced by temperature than by precipitation. No breeding activity was evident during the calling reported here, and chorusing ceased within 3 hours.

Acris blanchardi is a typical r-selected species with short adult life span (essentially annual population turnover), high fecundity, and rapid development to maturity (Burkett 1984). Selection for plasticity in chorusing and breeding season(s) has survival value to such species (see discussion in O’Donnell and Rayburn 2009).

Literature Cited


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Lined Snake (Tropidoclonion lineatum) predated by Eastern Racer (Coluber constrictor) in Central Nebraska

Eastern Racers (Coluber constrictor) consume a variety of vertebrates as food resources. Prey items are known to include amphibians, mammals, reptiles, and invertebrates (Fitch 1999, Halstead et al. 2008). Adult C. constrictors also have been shown to consume juveniles of their own species (Jackson 1971). In northeastern Kansas, Fitch (1999) observed C. constrictor to feed occasionally on small snakes. Of 184 prey items, snakes only accounted for 6% of observations including 4 Common Garter Snakes (Thamnophis sirtalis), 3 Brown Snakes (Storeria dekayi), 1 Eastern Racer (C. constrictor), 1 Ringneck Snake (Diadophis punctatus), 1 unspecified snake, and 1 Lined Snake (Tropidoclonion lineatum).

On 29 August 2013, we observed a regurgitated T. lineatum inside a funnel trap with two C. constrictor. The regurgitated T. lineatum was partially digested. The T. lineatum apparently was consumed by one of the C. constrictors prior to their capture, as no other species of vertebrates were present in the trap. Habitat surrounding the funnel trap consisted of a disturbed, sandy pasture near a slough in the floodplain of Platte River in Hall County, Nebraska (40.79526°N, 98.45672°W; NAD 1983). The primary vegetation of the location is Kentucky bluegrass (Poa pratensis), buffalo bur (Solanum rastratum), and prairie cordgrass (Spartina pectinata). According to a survey of herpetofauna at the Crane Trust by Geluso and Harner (2013), C. constrictor is not common. Only two individuals were captured during their study, and both were subadults. During the same study, T. lineatum represented the fifth most common species captured (Geluso and Harner 2013). Our observation represents the first observation of C. constrictor preying on T. lineatum in Nebraska and only the second reported observation