

# Qualia

## New frog species discovered in urban jungle

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The newly discovered species looks just like this northern leopard frog, distinguishable only by its croak (Photo: USGS)

Scientists have discovered a new species of frog in a very unusual place: the urban jungle of New York City. The frog was hiding in plain sight and only distinguished from closely related species by its DNA and its unique croak.

The new species is a type of leopard frog, of which there are over a dozen species ranging from Canada to Central America. This new species closely resembles the southern leopard frog and was likely mistaken for it for many years.

The new species first attracted the attention of Jeremy Feinberg, of Rutgers University, three years ago. He noticed that the leopard frogs in an area in Staten Island sounded different than other leopard frogs. Expecting to hear a "long snore" or a "rapid chuckle," Feinberg instead heard short, repetitive croaks. When he and a team of scientists returned to take samples and analyze the frogs' DNA, they discovered they had an entirely new species on their hands.

So far, the frogs have been found on Staten Island, Putnam and Orange counties in New York, central Connecticut, and in the Meadowlands and the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, both in New Jersey. The center of the range is near Yankee Stadium, though none of these frogs have yet been found in the Bronx. Feinberg and his colleagues believe that the species probably inhabited Manhattan and the other boroughs at some point in the past.

This discovery is surprising for a number of reasons. It's not often that a new species is found hiding in one of the most populated areas in the world. This shows that even urban centers may hold secrets in terms of biodiversity. This find also illustrates the power of genetic testing to distinguish between animals that look identical to the human eye but are in fact from quite

different lineages. New species may be hiding in plain sight, not just in remote jungles but also under our feet.

## **Related Links:**

- [A new species of leopard frog \(Anura: Ranidae\) from the urban northeastern US](#)  
(Elsevier, August 2011)