

Lowland Leopard Frog



Lithobates yavapaiensis

Identification

Lowland leopard frog also called Yavapai leopard frog is a relatively small frog up to 3.4 in/8.6 cm. This spotted frog is typically brown although some have a green head. The lowland leopard frog has a yellowish colored groin and typically lacks spots on the nose. The tadpoles are dark, mottled and stocky and grow up to 1.8–3.5 in/4.6-8.6 cm. Lowland leopard frog is considered for “Special Protection” in Mexico and state Endangered in California and New Mexico.



Photo credit: William R. Radke/USFWS

Observation Tips

The lowland leopard frog is currently known from Arizona. It is thought to be extirpated from other portions of the southwestern United States including New Mexico and California. The current status of the lowland leopard frog in Baja and Sonora Mexico is unknown. Lowland leopard frog populations are protected on state and federal lands in Arizona. Lowland leopard frogs are active day or night. It is easier to find them at night with a flashlight or headlamp.

Interesting Fact

The lowland leopard frog breeds year-round. Tadpoles can take a year or more to reach adulthood.

Ideal Habitat

The lowland leopard frog inhabits low elevation (below 3000 ft/ 1829 m) rivers, streams, wetlands, cienegas, cattle tanks, and other aquatic systems within Sonoran desertscrub and pinyon-juniper woodland. Preferred lowland leopard frog habitat is rocky streams in canyons surrounded by conifer forests or ponds and stream pools surrounded by scrub desert. In Saguaro National Park, lowland leopard frogs preferred plunge pools with vegetation (>60% herbaceous cover), more tree cover, and more hiding cover. These frogs do well in unregulated streams that are subject to periodic floods.



Range map provided by International Union for Conservation of Nature

Management Activities that Benefit Species – Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Management should limit sedimentation into streams when possible. A study in Saguaro National Park showed that when sediment filled ponds following wildfires, fewer lowland leopard frogs were present compared to areas without fires. Managing for fuels within the upland forested areas will benefit lowland leopard frog habitat and reduce the impact of wildfire. Well-managed livestock grazing using rotational grazing systems should provide areas of dense vegetation in riparian areas and wetlands needed by lowland leopard frog. Allow reintroduction into unoccupied habitat.

Management Activities to Avoid

Avoid introducing nonnative aquatic species such as fish, crayfish, and bullfrogs as these species prey on lowland leopard frogs. Avoid altering the hydrology of areas occupied by lowland leopard frog. Avoid collecting or allowing others to collect this rare frog.

Other Species that Benefit from Similar Habitat Management

Management for lowland leopard frog will benefit other species dependent upon desert water sources.

Other Resources

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). 2014. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2021-1

[Lowland leopard frog](#)

NatureServe. 2021. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. [Lithobates yavapaiensis](#)

NPS. Saguaro National Park [Leopard Frog research](#) and species profile [Lowland leopard frog](#)