



CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG

Anura
Family: Ranidae
Genus: *Rana*
Species: *draytonii*



Range: California and extreme northern Baja California and northwestern Mexico; found from sea level to \leq about 1,525 m in the Sierra Nevada

Habitat: sheltered backwaters of ponds, marshes, springs, streams, and reservoirs; associated with permanent bodies of water

Niche: Aquatic, carnivorous, primarily diurnal

Wild diet: Invertebrates but also pacific chorus frogs and California mice.

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild) 8 – 10 years
(Captivity)

Sexual dimorphism:

Location in SF Zoo: California Conservation Corridor

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The California Red-legged Frog is the largest native frog in the western United States. It has a reddish coloring on the underside of the legs and belly. California red-legged frogs can appear brown, gray, olive, red, or orange, often with a pattern of dark flecks or spots. A characteristic feature of the red-legged frog is its dorsolateral fold, visible on both sides of the frog, extending roughly from the eye to the hip. The hind legs are well-developed with large, webbed feet.

Weight:

Length: 1.7 – 5.5 in

R. draytonii looks very similar to the northern red-legged frog whose habitat can be seen on map in red and overlapping with California red-legged frog in purple.

STATUS & CONSERVATION:

The California red-legged frog is federally listed under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species throughout its range in California and is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red list. Efforts are being made to reestablish CA red-legged frog populations.

This species is estimated to have disappeared from 70% of its range. The main cause of the population decline is degradation and loss of its habitat, but also introduced predatory species, such as American bullfrogs. Frogs legs were once considered a delicacy and CA red-legged frogs were heavily hunted during the Gold Rush.

COMMUNICATION & OTHER BEHAVIOR:

Accessibility to sheltering habitat is essential for the survival of California red-legged frogs within a watershed. Some California red-legged frogs move long distances over land between water sources during winter rains. Most of these overland movements occur at night.

California red-legged frog males communicate to females by a series of short, soft grunts--"unh-unh-uh-uh -grr." They will grunt several times then end the call with a growl.

This species is usually active in daylight and inhabits dense, shrubby, or emergent riparian vegetation and still or slow-moving perennial and ephemeral water bodies that also serve as breeding sites. They do not like very hot temperatures and will seek shade within tall grasses and reeds.

COURTSHIP & YOUNG:

Males develop enlarged forearms and a dark nuptial pad on each thumb during the breeding season. Breeding occurs from November to March, or sometimes earlier toward the southern limits of its range. Eggs are laid during or shortly after large rainfall events in late winter and early spring. Egg masses are typically attached to emergent vegetation near the water surface. Typically, tadpoles metamorphose from May–September; less than 1 percent of eggs laid reaching metamorphosis. Some tadpoles overwinter and metamorphose the following summer.

Incubation: 6 – 14 days # of Eggs: ave 2,000	Sexual Maturity: 3 – 4 years Larval stage: 3.5 – 7 mo to attain metamorphosis May overwinter and metamorphosis occurs up to 13 mos
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MISCELLANEOUS

A joint project between the Zoo and the National Park Service at Yosemite National Park has just been signed to reintroduce red-legged frogs and pond turtles to Yosemite Valley with the goal to establish self-sustaining breeding populations in Yosemite Valley by 2020. Yosemite National Park was once home to the federally threatened California red-legged frog and California species of special concern Western pond turtle, but both species have since disappeared from most, if not all, of the park. Even with several decades of effective restoration actions the frogs and turtles have not recolonized on their own.

The California red-legged frog is an important food source for the endangered San Francisco garter snake in San Mateo County. It is an indicator species and helps biologists know that an ecosystem is healthy. The California red-legged frog plays an important role as a population control mechanism for insects such as mosquitoes.

It became famous for being the frog featured in Mark Twain's short story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

Sources:

created 10/2015

<http://www.fws.gov/arcata/es/amphibians/crlf/crlf.html>

http://amphibiaweb.org/cgi-bin/amphib_query?where-genus=Rana&where-species=draytonii

<http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Library/Amphibians-Reptiles-and-Fish/California-Red-Legged-Frog.aspx>

<http://www.californiaherps.com/frogs/pages/r.draytonii.html>