

Chiricahua Leopard Frog

Rana chiricahuensis

Family Ranidae



FWS Status: PT

Global Rank: G3

State Rank: S1 (NM); S3 (AZ)

Distribution: Occurs in mountain regions of central and southeastern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and the Sierra Madre Occidental, to southern Durango in Mexico (Sonora and Chihuahua). There appears to be a gap in range along the lower Gila River in Arizona, and isolated populations in Socorro County, New Mexico. The species ranges from around 3,500 to 7,900 ft. (1,070 to 2,410 m.) in elevation.

Description: Adult frogs reach up to 5 1/2 in. (13.5 cm.) in snout-vent length. They are stockier than the northern leopard frog and have a more rounded head, shorter limbs, and slightly upturned eyes. The dorsolateral folds usually are broken into short segments towards the rear and angled inward. The skin is rougher, with more tubercles. Dorsal spots are generally smaller and more numerous than with other leopard frogs. Coloration above is generally greenish or brown, and face is usually green. The upper lip stripe is diffused or absent in front of the eyes. The rear of the thighs are speckled with "salt-and-pepper"



*Current range of the
Chiricahua leopard frog*

patterns, with each small dot having a tubercle. Coloration below is dull whitish or yellowish, with gray mottling on throat and yellowish on groin and lower abdomen. Adult males have swollen and darkened thumb base. The call is long and snorelike, and appears to be more rapid than most leopard frogs.

Reproduction: In thermally stable habitats, the frog may remain reproductively active throughout the year, with tadpoles growing continuously during the winter months. Where water temperatures are variable, reproduction has been noted only from late-February through May and from mid-August through late September. Metamorphose may occur in a little as 2-3 months at relatively stable water temperatures and up to 8-9 months in habitats having drops in winter water temperatures.

Food: Food habits of the Chiricahua leopard frog have not been well studied, but are believed to be similar to all leopard frogs. They probably eat a variety of insects and other arthropods.

Habits: The frog is highly aquatic and is found chiefly in oak and mixed oak and pine woodlands and in pine forests where it frequents rocky streams with deep rock-bound pools. It may also range into areas of chaparral, grasslands, and even desert. It is known to be attracted to river overflow pools, oxbows, permanent springs (including thermal pools), ponds, and earthen stock tanks.

Management Implications: The Chiricahua leopard frog has been in decline throughout its range in both Arizona and New Mexico. The FWS did a status review of the species in 1994 and has proposed it for threatened status.

Important References: Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. The Peterson Field Guide Series, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY; Degenhardt, W.G., C.W. Painter, and A.H. Price. 1996. Amphibians and reptiles of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.