

Plains Leopard Frog

Rana blairi
Family Ranidae



Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S1 (AZ); S3 (CO); S4 (NM)

Distribution: Ranges from southeastern South Dakota and western Iowa to eastern New Mexico and central Texas; eastern Colorado to central Indiana and central Oklahoma. It extends west in New Mexico along the Rio Bonito, Rio Hondo, and upper Rio Penasco to around 7,000 ft. (2,130 m.) near Sierra Blanca, Lincoln County, south along the Pecos River to near Carlsbad, Eddy County. Isolated populations on western side of the Chiricahua Mountains and adjoining Sulphur Springs Valley in southeastern Arizona, from about 350 ft. (110 m.) to 8,500 ft. (2,590 m.) in elevation.

Description: Adults range to 4 1/2 in. (11 cm.) in snout-vent length. This generally pale-colored leopard frog has light buffy brown to dull green above with brown to olive-green dorsal spots that lack or have very narrow pale borders. There is a whitish stripe on the upper lip, and usually a well-defined pale spot in the center of the eardrum. Coloration below is white, sometimes with fine dark stippling or mottling on the throat. Some yellow may be present in the groin, on lower abdomen, and at



Current range of the plains leopard frog

base of thighs. Dorsolateral folds usually not continuous. Young have whitish upper lip stripes, often well defined. In adult males, the deflated vocal sacs tend to have lengthwise folds. Voice is usually 1-4 guttural, chuckle-like notes lasting less than a second.

Reproduction: Breeding occurs early February to early October. Eggs have been reported from March, May, and August, with tadpoles present late March to early June, and August to October. Large clutches of eggs are attached to vegetation in shallow water. Some tadpoles may overwinter.

Food: Probably feeds on a variety of insects and invertebrates. An individual was captured with a stomach full of grasshoppers and another contained a bat.

Habits: Found chiefly on the central and southern Great Plains, in prairie and desert grassland, but this frog also enters oak and oak-pine woodland and farmland. It frequents prairie pools, ponds, and streams (both permanent and temporary) where the water at times is muddy and shallow. It is more drought-resistant than the northern leopard frog. In the western states, it is found in streams, ponds, irrigation ditches, pools in rocky canyons, and rivers.

Management Implications: No known management concerns. Overlaps with the range of the Chiricahua leopard frog and the Rio Grande leopard frog, and may hybridize with them.

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 Mex-

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