

# Wood Frog

*Rana sylvatica*  
Family Ranidae



**BLM Status:** Sensitive (MT)

**Global Rank:** G5

**State Status:** S2 (WY); S3 (CO); S3S4 (AK);  
SH (ID); SR (MT)

**Distribution:** Found in most of Alaska and Canada, southward in eastern United States to the southern Appalachian Mountains. Also found in extreme northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. Disjunct populations found in Arkansas and Missouri, and, in the west, at several locations in Wyoming and northcentral Colorado. The distribution of the wood frog follows closely the distribution of spruce.

**Description:** Adult wood frogs reach up to 2 in. (5 cm.) in snout-vent length. Key characteristics include a pointed snout; a dark mask with a light lip line; brown, gray, or blue-greenish coloration on dorsal surface; may have spots; and the webbing does not extend to the tip of the toes. Skin is smooth with distinct dorsolateral folds. Some populations have mid-dorsal light stripe. Ventral coloration is white and mottled. Hind legs are shorter than most true frogs. Tadpoles reach up to 2 in. (5 cm.) with key characteristics of dark olive or brownish dorsal coloration; a cream



*Current range of the wood frog*

colored ventral coloration with pinkish iridescence; a short snout; large dorsally located eyes; and the tail almost twice as long as the body. Adult males develop swollen and darkened thumb base and paired vocal sacs, one over each forelimb. The voice is a series of rather high grating notes lasting one second or less, similar to the clucking of domestic ducks.

**Reproduction:** Wood frogs breed shortly after ice has melted from ponds and small lakes. Females lay eggs as late as July, depending upon elevations. Up to 3,000 eggs are laid in baseball-sized clutches, and many females may deposit their eggs at the same site. Larvae metamorphose in the spring or summer. Adults become sexually mature in two to three years.

**Food:** Diet of the wood frog includes a variety of small invertebrates, especially terrestrial insects. Larval forms eat algae, plant tissue, organic debris, and minute water-borne organisms.

**Habits:** Inactive during cold seasons in north and at high elevations. Hides in humus, leaf litter, under rocks, or in/under logs. Most active in summer in damp conditions during the daytime, but breeding activity may occur at night. After leaving ponds at the end of breeding activity or metamorphosing from larvae, adults usually remain in an area less than 100 m. across. Wood frog skin secretions repulse predators such as shrews and aquatic insects.

**Management Implications:** This is the only amphibian in North America to occur north of the Arctic Circle. The relic population in the Medicine Bow Mountains of Wyoming extending south into Colorado appears to be healthy. However, the population status in Wyoming's Big Horn Mountains is unknown. Idaho's population is believed to be rare. Montana's population may be adversely im-

acted by habitat modification and human development.

**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; Baxter, G.T., and M.D. Stone. 1980. Amphibians and reptiles of Wyoming. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne, WY; Groves, C.R., B. Butterfield, A. Lippincott, B. Csuti, and J.M. Scott. 1997. Atlas of Idaho's wildlife. Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, ID.