

AMPHIBIANS

Amphibians are cold-blooded animals that breathe through lungs, gills, skin, or the lining of the mouth, and pass through a larval stage in a moist environment, either in water or inside an egg. This class includes frogs, toads, and salamanders. Many amphibians seek shelter in animal burrows. Eggs are laid in moist locations and will be destroyed if removed from their moist environment.

CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG (RANA AURORA DRAYTONII)

Federal/California status: Threatened/--



Description

The California red-legged frog is the largest native frog of the western United States with adults ranging from 1.75 to 5.25 inches (4.4 to 13.1 cm) in length. Body coloration is dark brown to olive gray, with poorly defined spots or

patches. Reddish pigmentation covers the entire surface of its body, or it may be nearly absent. Usually it is seen on back of the thighs down to the feet. Yellowish coloration with black banding on the back of the thighs is sometimes seen. Tadpoles are 0.6 to 3.1 inches (14 to 80 mm) in length and are dark brown and yellow with darker spots.

California red-legged frogs have a variable diet with insects, deer mice, and Pacific tree frogs making up a substantial portion of the diet. Adult and sub-adult frogs typically forage at night while juveniles forage day and night. Feeding generally occurs along the shoreline and on the surface of the water.

Breeding typically occurs from January to March when the females will attach egg masses varying from approximately 2000 to 6000 eggs to vertical emergent vegetation such as cattails or bulrushes. Eggs hatch approximately 6 to 14 days after fertilization and take about 3.5 to 7 months to grow to adulthood. Frogs and their eggs are extremely sensitive to most chemicals, pesticides, herbicides and insecticides.

Habitat

These frogs are generally found in or near deep pools of water, generally 3 feet (1 m) or deeper. However they may travel great distances from water in search of foraging or resting habitat. Rocks or logs, vegetation along the shoreline, small undercuts in the banks of ponds and small mammal burrows may provide adequate habitat.

Range/distribution

The California red-legged frog may be found in Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Los Angeles, Marin, Mendocino, Merced, Monterey, Napa, Placer, Riverside, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Tehama counties.

Photo: CSUS/ESRP