

EFFORTS TO RE-ESTABLISH NORTHERN LEOPARD FROG ON THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION

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The northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*) was once common throughout Montana but is now extirpated from most of western Montana including the Flathead Indian Reservation. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe's Wildlife Management Program is working to return leopard frogs to the Flathead Indian Reservation. Potential source populations were identified through DNA testing in 2001. Reintroduction methodology was tested using Columbia spotted frogs (*Rana luteiventris*) in 2002. In 2003, eight egg masses were collected from five leopard frog source populations. Each mass was placed within a float that in turn was placed inside an enclosure to protect the eggs from predators and keep track of individuals. An estimated 16,500 tadpoles hatched from these egg masses. Five hundred tadpoles were released into each enclosure and the remaining tadpoles were released into the surrounding water. Tadpoles outside the enclosures grew and developed more quickly than the tadpoles inside enclosures, however, survival within the enclosures was high, 68 percent. During July 2003, we released 1342 tadpoles and 21 metamorphs from within the enclosures into the surrounding water. Time constrained surveys were conducted after the release to monitor leopard frog metamorphs until the end of September 2003. Intensive surveys will be conducted in spring 2004 to estimate winter survival and to determine dispersal distances from the release sites. We plan to continue similar reintroduction and long-term monitoring efforts at current and additional release sites.