

Northern Leopard Frog - *Rana pipiens*

By: Jeff LeClere

Status

A valid fishing license is required to possess this species for bait or food. Common throughout Iowa, although we would like reports of the "burnsi phase" of this species (see below).

Description

The leopard frog is the most familiar frog in Iowa. They may grow to 3 1/2 inches body length. They may be varying shades of green or brown. There are round black spots scattered randomly about the back and on the sides and usually one on the snout. They belly is plain white. There are two light (sometimes golden) complete dorsolateral ridges down the back. There are spots on the forelimbs and "tiger" stripes or bars on the hind legs. The groin and thighs have a greenish (very rarely yellowish) wash.

Brown specimens of the leopard frog differ from pickerel frogs by having round spots scattered randomly about the about the back, and a greenish wash on the thighs. Also pickerel frogs are found only in the trout streams of extreme leaestern Iowa. One variant of the northern leopard frog is found in Iowa; the burnsi form is found from time to time about the state. It is brown or green with no dorsal spots. It has spots or bars on the limbs, and may have black stippling on the back and sides.

Subspecies

There are no subspecies of the northern leopard frog, *Rana pipiens*.

Range

The northern leopard frog is found statewide in Iowa.

Habitat

The northern leopard frog is found in all water types. Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, large and small wetlands, even homemade ponds. Leopard frogs move considerable distances from water, especially in wet grasslands or damp woodlands.

Habits{youtube}luXzpmcq3QM{/youtube}

Northern leopard frogs breed in March and April. Sometimes males call while underwater. They produce a low pitched snore often followed by a chuckling noise, or a deep urr, urr, urr. A single female may lay 3,000 to 5,000 eggs in a round mass. The females may all lay eggs in one portion of the pond. Tadpoles metamorphose in about three months.

During rainy weather, (especially during spring or fall migrations) great numbers of these frogs are seen crossing the roadway, especially near wetlands. So many may be on the road that it causes a slick driving hazard. They may also venture into backyards and move into outdoor ponds or swimming pools. When they move far from a body of water, they may absorb dew to keep them moist. They hibernate in deep water. These frogs are declining due to habitat destruction, additions of roadways, pollution, and other factors. Also, they are collected for biological supply houses, fishermen use them for bait, and any medium or large sized carnivores prey upon them.

Food {youtube}yswmmRZFItk{/youtube}

Northern leopard

frogs consume insects, earthworms, and other invertebrates.