

Northern Leopard Frog Conservation in Alberta



Northern Leopard Frog | Pixabay

Amphibians around the world have been facing difficult circumstances as human development and presence has put pressure on their delicate habitats and populations.

Amphibians are a **uniquely sensitive** group of species as they require a **stable source of water and appropriate terrestrial habitat** to be successful.

Additionally, many amphibian species absorb water through their skin, making them very sensitive to any introduced pollutants in the water. Because of such, they are often referred to as an ***indicator species***.

An indicator species is useful in evaluating the health of an ecosystem based on the presence or absence of that species. Since amphibians are **often the first to disappear** from a degrading ecosystem they make an excellent choice. In Alberta, the Northern Leopard Frog has long been used for such a purpose.

The Northern Leopard is **one of three true frog species in Alberta** and can be found from the Rocky Mountains all the way to the east coast of Canada and as far south as New Mexico. Named after its distinctive spotted pattern across its body, it is easily recognizable.

Northern Leopard Frogs typically **live in lightly wooded areas with a constant source of clean fresh water**. In fact, many of the conservation areas that Legacy Land Trust is responsible for have these characteristics.

However, with the advent of large-scale agriculture these critical habitats have been in decline due to fragmentation and disturbance so these frogs now are mainly restricted to the southern grasslands of Alberta.

Northern Leopard Frog populations were first recognized as *Threatened* by the Alberta government under Alberta's Wildlife Act in 1996.

In 2004 the extremely cool sounding Alberta Northern Leopard Frog Recovery Team (ANLFRT) was created to draft a recovery plan for the species. This ultimately resulted in a **province-wide survey** to identify where the frogs were.

Around 20 new populations were identified, many on private agricultural land. To protect these frogs, landowners were educated on **the best practices** to preserve them. These



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included ensuring cattle didn't disrupt the habitat, preventing the draining of wetlands, and ensuring no major pollutants in the water sources.

Several **reintroduction programs** were created where eggs were introduced to suitable habitats and deemed a success after 5 years of close monitoring. The species is still classified as *At Risk*, but progress is being made in a positive direction.

The Northern Leopard Frog is a **key species in Albertan wetlands and ecosystems**, acting as a indicator of ecosystem health and filling a key predatory role. It may even hold important medical information—leopard frogs have been valuable in medical research involving brain tumours and cancer.

These frogs are a wonderful piece of wildlife, and they are finally getting the attention and conservation efforts they deserve.

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[Click here for more information about Northern Leopard Frogs.](#)