

BULLFROG

Lithobates catesbeianus



Identification/Origin

American bullfrogs, native to the Central and Eastern U.S., are an invasive species in Montana. They are large frogs with wide heads, stout bodies, and long, hind legs with fully-webbed hind feet. Bullfrogs have smooth skin which is green to brown in color on their backs, often with dark spots or mottling, and white to grey to yellow in color on their bellies, with or without mottling. Due to their prolific breeding and predatory behavior they can take over a waterbody and become the dominate amphibian species. Bullfrogs are found in diverse environments, including lakes, ponds, cattle tanks, backwaters, and slow-moving streams.

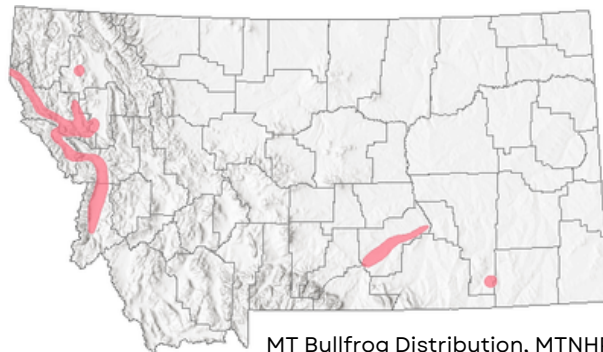
Level of Infestation in Montana

In Montana, the American bullfrog has been documented to have an almost continuous distribution in the valley bottoms along the Bitterroot River downstream of Darby, the Clark Fork River downstream of Missoula, and the Flathead River downstream of Dixon. Reproducing populations have been reported in Laurel, Billings, and Fort Peck. Individual adults have been reported in Helena, Belgrade, near Silver City northwest of Helena, and near Lake Koocanusa near the Canadian border. American bullfrog introduction in the western United States and Montana is largely due to their use as a recreational hunting and food item.

Pathways



Non-native
animal or plant
release



MT Bullfrog Distribution, MTNHP
2024



Reporting

Report bullfrogs to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 'Report a Suspected AIS' at 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668) or online at <https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/aquatic-invasive-species/report-an-ais>.

Impacts

American bullfrogs eat anything smaller than themselves, including ducklings, fish, native amphibians, turtles, various invertebrates, and frequently cannibalize smaller individuals of their own species. This may impact native predators, like gartersnakes, which rely on amphibians for food, and they can carry chytrid fungus, contributing to declines in native frog populations.

Regional Ramifications

American bullfrogs represent a major predatory and competition threat to native amphibians and other vertebrate and invertebrate species. American bullfrogs have been implicated in the decline of several amphibian species throughout the western United States and around the world. The impact on Montana's native herpetofauna is unknown, but bullfrogs have negatively affected northern leopard frog and Columbia spotted frog populations in the Bitterroot Valley.

More Information

More information on the American bullfrog can be found on the Montana State University Extension website or the Montana Field Guide Website.



US Bullfrog Distribution, USGS
NAS 2024