



Amphibians and Reptiles

Jeff Kelly, Joel Strong, Jesse Bahm, & Adrienne Lee
Cooper, Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory

RESOURCE BRIEF



COURTESY OF COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Plains leopard frog

Importance

Amphibians and reptiles (herps) represent an important part of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. They eat a wide variety of invertebrate species, and, in turn, they are prey for many fish, bird, and mammal species. The American Southwest is well known for its abundance and diversity of reptiles. Although this region is less known for its amphibian populations, they too can be quite abundant in some habitats and are good indicators of environmental change due to their sensitivity to a variety of factors such as pollution, introduced species, drought, habitat destruction, and disease.

Status and Trends

The Chickasaw National Recreation Area (CHICK), nearly 10,000 acres in size, is dominated by forest, herbaceous, and woodland vegetation types, and about 16% of the area is covered by the Lake of the Arbuckles. An inventory for amphibians and reptiles was conducted in 2003 by the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory (ONHI). This work will provide baseline information for future monitoring. Pre-inventory lists of herps thought to occur in the county or south-central Oklahoma contained 16 species of amphibians and 63 species of reptiles.



COURTESY OF U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Copperhead

Nine amphibian species were recorded during 2003, all of which were on the pre-inventory list for the county: the Woodhouse's toad (*Bufo woodhousii*), American toad (*Bufo americanus*), Great Plains narrowmouth toad (*Gastrophryne olivacea*), gray treefrog complex (*Hyla versicolor* and *H. chrysoscelis*), Blanchard's cricket frog (*Acris crepitans blanchardi*), spotted chorus frog (*Pseudacris clarkii*), bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*), Plains leopard frog (*Rana blairi*), and Southern leopard frog (*Rana utricularia*). The Southern leopard frog was recorded in the greatest numbers.

Thirty-seven reptile species were recorded during the 2003 inventory— 18 species of snakes, 10 species of lizards, and 9 species of turtles. Some of the more frequently caught species included: the copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*), brown snake (*Storeria dekayi*), and prairie ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus arnyi*); the ground skink (*Scincella lateralis*), Texas spotted whiptail (*Aspidoscelis gularis gularis*), and five lined skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*); and the red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) and three-toed box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*).

Discussion

As noted in the 2003 inventory report, additional sampling could encounter additional species, but pre-inventory lists probably contain some species that may not be found at CHICK. Focus of any additional surveys should be on snakes and amphibians in the spring. Also, a feral cat control program, or research on the impacts of feral cats, would benefit wildlife (e.g., herps) that may fall prey to cats.

