



Opportunistic Survey of Alaska's Amphibians

Project Overview

Amphibians have been identified by the Inventory and Monitoring Program as a taxonomic group to be included in opportunistic field studies. The known amphibian diversity in the Alaska National Parks is limited to southeastern Alaska, with one species (wood frog, *Rana sylvatica*) frequently occurring into the arctic regions of Alaska. In order to establish a basis for understanding habitat requirements and distribution, an opportunistic amphibian survey was incorporated into the budget of the Southeast Alaska Network Biological Inventory by Lewis Sharman, Network Lead (GLBA).

In order to facilitate species identification, The Alaska Region Inventory and Monitoring Program, with the help of the Alaska Natural History Association (ANHA), has developed durable waterproof flashcards that display a measurement ruler, descriptive text, photographs, and drawings of the different life stages of known Alaskan amphibians. This survey will utilize observations reported by field staff while involved in other projects.

Regional staff provided photographs, text, citations, and oversight, while ANHA provided the design template, draft version, and final flashcards. The flashcards were designed to be easy to carry in the field and to help identify found species. The field forms and flashcards were reviewed by both Chad Soiseth, Aquatic Biologist Glacier Bay NP & Preserve (GLBA), and Kirk Lohman, Regional Science Advisor prior to publication.

To date, we have accomplished the following:

- 150 final sets of weatherproof flashcards were designed, printed, and distributed to park staff and principal investigators.
- A field form was developed to be used by field staff to record observations.
- An ArcView shapefile has been created to show the spatial distribution of sightings, and to allow analysis.
- Final materials have been delivered to the Parks.
- An additional 100 sets of flashcards will be distributed to local groups, volunteers, and interested people.
- A database has been developed, populated, and tested with actual data from the 2001 field records.

Preliminary Results

- A surprising number of the boreal toads (*Bufo boreas boreas*) were documented in the intertidal area by the GLBA Coastwalker program. Several have been observed in the wrack line on beaches. This may be an interesting addition to the known behavior/ habitat of this species.
- Boreal toads have also shown a surprising abundance in recently deglaciated areas of GLBA.
- The sole observation to date from outside of the SEAN Parks was a wood frog in GAAR.
- More observations are expected as parks expand their inventories and other parks come up to speed.
- Further training of park personnel, on the use of the forms is possible to ensure adequate and reliable data collection.

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