

San Francisco Zoo brings red-legged frogs back to Yosemite

August 22 2019



This May 3, 2019, file photo, provided by the National Park Service shows a close-up image of a red-legged frog released in Cook's Meadow in Yosemite Valley in Yosemite National Park, Calif. A healthy population of red-legged frogs is hopping in Yosemite National Park thanks to a reintroduction program with the San Francisco Zoo. The San Francisco Examiner reports that the zoo on Monday, Aug. 19, 2019, released the last of the more than 1,000 red-legged

frogs into the park as part of a four-year-long effort to reintroduce the once-threatened species. (Al Golub/Yosemite Conservancy/National Park Service via AP, File)

A healthy population of red-legged frogs is hopping in Yosemite National Park, helped by a reintroduction program with the San Francisco Zoo.

The zoo on Monday released the last of more than 1,000 red-legged frogs into the park as part of a four-year effort to reintroduce the once-threatened species, the San Francisco Examiner reported .

At 2 to 5 inches long (5 to 13 centimeters), red-legged frogs are the largest native frogs in the West and once were found throughout California. The frog's population began declining 50 years ago after the introduction of predatory, non-native bullfrogs, exacerbated by increasing water drainage and raccoons.

In partnership with the Yosemite Conservancy, the zoo has been breeding and raising tadpoles and adult red-legged frogs since 2015 and releasing them into the park over the past two years.

Yosemite biologists have conducted skin swabs and surveys to monitor the health of the population. Zoo staff placed transmitters on 45 of the frogs released in order to track them and better understand their behaviors.

Zoo data shows the frogs in the wild have survived and reproduced.

"The challenge is to see if they will still do well in the next five years," said Jessie Bushell, the zoo's director of conservation.

Ecologists this spring found clusters of eggs in meadows and ponds, proof of the first breeding in the park by the frogs.



In this May 3, 2019, file photo, provided by the National Park Service, Yosemite National Park Aquatic Ecologist Rob Grasso releases a red-legged frog in water in Cook's Meadow in Yosemite Valley in Yosemite National Park, Calif. A healthy population of red-legged frogs is hopping in Yosemite National Park thanks to a reintroduction program with the San Francisco Zoo. The San Francisco Examiner reports that the zoo on Monday, Aug. 19, 2019, released the last of the more than 1,000 red-legged frogs into the park as part of a four-year-long effort to reintroduce the once-threatened species. (Al Golub/Yosemite Conservancy/National Park Service via AP, File)

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