

## JULY 1-14, 2022 - NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

### **PICKEREL FROG VS NORTHERN LEOPARD FROG**

There are two species of frogs that look very similar but have significant characteristics to tell them apart.



1. Am I a Pickerel Frog or a Northern Leopard Frog? © Dick Harlow



2. Am I a Pickerel Frog or a Northern Leopard Frog? © Jane Cernek pinterest.com

When looking at two frogs that look very similar the first thing you want to do is look at their back, the middle of their back, their top or dorsal side. Are the dark spots on their back chocolate-brown or black, are they balanced in two rows or are they irregular with a dot here and there out of place?

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If the dots are irregular and not even, you are looking at a **Northern Leopard Frog**, *Lithobates pipiens*.

On the other hand, if you are seeing spots that are more chocolate-brown and seem evenly spaced in two rows on the middle back of the frog you are looking at a **Pickerel Frog**, *Lithobates palustris*.

Picture 1 is a Northern Leopard Frog and Picture 2 is a Pickerel Frog.

The two pictures certainly show a distinct difference. However, it can be confusing because some Pickerel Frogs show aligned spots on their back, but they are not chocolate-brown and they are not evenly spaced.

### **NORTHERN LEOPARD FROG**

Habitat for the Northern Leopard Frog can be a stream, a pond, a marsh, or Eastview's North and South Ponds. Any body of water with a lot of vegetation is prime habitat for the Leopard Frog.

The fact that there has been throughout this country habitat loss for many animals could be a reason for the decline of the Northern Leopard Frog. Since 1970 biologists determined that there was a decline in population numbers of the Northern Leopard Frog. There have always been disagreements as to why Leopard Frog number are declining. But habitat loss, fragmentation, and environmental contaminants can't be ignored.

Northern Leopard Frogs feed on insects such flies, crickets, or worms as well as other smaller amphibians.

Pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides are in the environment, and we know that they affect animal populations, but we still have a need to know more specifics about how these poisons effect ecology.

The predators of Northern Leopard Frogs are raccoons, Bullfrog, snakes, and humans.

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Northern Leopard Frog Range Map–Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org

### **PICKEREL FROG**

The habitat for the Pickerel Frog is slightly different from the Leopard Frog. Pickerel Frogs prefer clear cool water whether that water be in a pond that is permanent, which is preferred, or temporary.

EastView's North and South Ponds are perfect for the Northern Leopard Frog because the ponds lack clear cool water.

Pickerel Frogs eat an abundance of insects such as beetles, spiders, ants, any bug that crosses its path when it is hungry. Pickerel Frogs will also venture into any grassy area near its water source to hunt.

The Pickerel Frog has several predators. Other larger frogs, such as the Bull Frog, or the Green Frog will attack and eat the Pickerel Frog. Since the Pickerel Frog will venture into grassy areas the Common Garter Snake as well as water snakes will prey on pickerel frogs.

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Pickerel Frog Range Map–Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org

This species does have a defensive mechanism that will dissuade other possible predators. When they are either threatened or are attacked this frog will emit from its skin secretions that are irritating and toxic. It is considered the only poisonous frog that is native to the United States. Consequently, most would be predators, will avoid attacking this frog.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

Red Fox  
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit  
Field Mouse  
Meadow Vole

#### **REPTILES**

Garter Snake

#### **AMPHIBIANS**

Eastern Bull Frog  
Pickerel Frog  
Northern Leopard Frog  
Eastern American Toad

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### **BUTTERFLIES**

Cabbage White  
Yellow Sulphur  
Monarch  
Viceroy

*All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).*

### **PRECIPITATION**

**Average July Precipitation for Vermont = 4.17 inches.**

**Total precipitation for the first two weeks in July was 19.4 mm or 0.76 inches. To be even with the month's precipitation average we need to have 3.41 inches of rain the last two weeks of this month.**

**Overcast Days 1-14: We had 6 days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 5 days produced rain.**