

# NOTES ON THE GREEN FROG AND THE MINK FROG IN MANITOBA

PER TAYLOR, P.O. Box 59, Pinawa, Manitoba. R0E 1L0



*Green Frog habitat at Springer Lake, Manitoba*

*P. Taylor*

The Green Frog [*Rana clamitans melanota* (Rafinesque)] and the Mink Frog [*R. septentrionalis* Baird] are both highly aquatic species that reach the eastern limits of their ranges in eastern Manitoba.<sup>1 2 3 5 6</sup> Both are common in the province. This paper reports a sound record of the Green Frog and its previously recorded Manitoba sound and additional sight and sound records of the Mink Frog.

There are only three Manitoba specimens of the Green Frog, all from Whiteshell Provincial Park (P.P.): two at George Lake by S. Criddle, 7 October 1936, and one east of Pointe du Lac by R.K. Stewart-Hay, 20 August 1964. Logier and Toner cite an additional locality, Caddy Lake (also in Whiteshell P.P.), based on correspondence with R.W. Stewart-Hay, and this is included on Preston's distribution map.<sup>5 6</sup>

There are many more records of the Mink Frog than the Green Frog in

Manitoba, all in or near Whiteshell P.P.<sup>6</sup> Early confusion as to the status of this species in the province was clarified by Cook, who collected 12 specimens and examined others, and Preston has mapped seven known localities.<sup>1 6</sup>

While conducting a Breeding Bird Survey at Springer Lake, Nopiming P.P. (50°32' N, 95°28' W), at 0500 h on 23 June 1989, I heard a familiar and unmistakable "clung," the territorial call of a male Green Frog. It was no longer calling at 0930, after the bird survey was complete, but calls were heard again on three subsequent visits that summer: 0600 to 0700 h 25 June; 1915 to 2000 h 29 June; 2130 to 2200 h 31 July. It is likely that the same individual was heard on each occasion, because the calls issued from the same point in the lake, close to the eastern shore of a bay near Provincial Road (P.R.) 314. The calls were clearly audible from 300 to 500 m across the bay.



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These observations confirm the continued, albeit perhaps tenuous existence of the Green Frog in Manitoba, and may indicate its territorial behaviour in the province (for an account of the territorial nature of this frog, see Jenssen and Preston, and references therein<sup>4</sup>). The calling dates fall within the expected breeding season. The locality is about 30 km north of the previous specimen localities, George Lake and Pointe du Bois. Springer Lake lies in a rocky, forested area at the edge of the Maskwa burn, site of a major forest fire in September 1983. The bay where the frog was heard is bordered with emergent vegetation (mainly sedges and cattails), and Yellow Pond-lilies (*Nuphar variegatum*) are numerous in the open water.

Small numbers of Mink Frogs were also heard in the same bay on each visit. On 25 June, they were heard at five additional locations southwest of Springer Lake. Three of these locations were along Peterson Creek, which drains Springer Lake into the Oiseau (Bird) River. The Oiseau River flows in turn into Lac du Bonnet on the Winnipeg River. From the junction of P.R. 314 and 315, the three locations were 4.9 km northeast, 2.5 km northeast, and 4.2 km southwest. The fourth was a beaver pond east of P.R. 315, 3.0 km northeast of Poplar Bay campground. The fifth was the eastern extremity of Pinawa Lake, just northwest of the junction of P.R. 313 and 315 (50°20' N, 95°47' W). Poplar Bay and Pinawa Lake are both arms of Lac

du Bonnet. All these localities lie within the northwestern range limit of the Mink Frog as estimated by Preston.<sup>6</sup>

The Mink Frog's call is less distinctive than that of the Green Frog, usually a triple cluck that suggests the phrase "cocker duck." This resembles the call of the Wood Frog [*R. sylvatica* LeConte], which is abundant in much of Manitoba, including the Whiteshell - Nopiming region. Although the Wood Frog chorus is an early spring phenomenon, some individuals call sporadically in mid-summer. At the first of the Peterson Creek localities listed above, identification of calling Mink Frogs was confirmed by excellent views of four individuals swimming and floating in the slow, dark waters of the creek. They were readily identified by their size (comparable to a Leopard Frog, *R. pipiens* Schreber) and general colour with irregular dark mottling.

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- <sup>1</sup> COOK, F.R. 1963. The rediscovery of the Mink Frog in Manitoba. *Can. Field-Nat.* 77:129-130.
- <sup>2</sup> COOK, F.R. 1984. Introduction to Canadian reptiles and amphibians. *Mus. Nat. Sci., Ottawa*. 200 pp.
- <sup>3</sup> HEDEEN, S.E. 1986. The southern geographic limit of the Mink Frog, *Rana septentrionalis*. *Copeia* (No. 1) 239-242.
- <sup>4</sup> JENSSEN, T.A. and W.B. PRESTON. 1968. Behavioral responses of the Green Frog, *Rana clamitans*, to its recorded call. *Herpetologica* 24:181-182.
- <sup>5</sup> LOGIER, E.B.S. and G.C. TORREY. 1961. Check list of the amphibian and reptiles of Canada and Alaska. *Contrib. Life Sci. Div., Roy. Ont. Mus.*, Toronto. 92 pp.
- <sup>6</sup> PRESTON, W.B. 1982. The amphibians and reptiles of Manitoba. *Mus. of Man and Nature, Winnipeg*. 140 pp.