



**Media Contacts:**

Whitney DalBalcon, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, 253-278-6343, [whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org](mailto:whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org)

Jennifer Becar, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 564-669-0850, [jennifer.becar@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:jennifer.becar@dfw.wa.gov)

**ENDANGERED NORTHERN LEOPARD FROGLETS GROWING FAST AT NORTHWEST TREK**

*Recovery effort gives head-start to froglets for future return to wild*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 21, 2023

EATONVILLE, Wash.—Hundreds of endangered northern leopard frogs will leap back into the wild soon, thanks to a recovery effort at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officials delivered the frog eggs to the Eatonville wildlife park in early May.

“We’ve watched them hatch and then grow from tadpoles to froglets in a short amount of time,” said Northwest Trek Zoological Curator Marc Heinzman. “At this rate, the frogs should be ready to hop back into the wild this summer.”

Once abundant throughout North America, northern leopard frogs are rapidly disappearing from their native ranges in Washington, Oregon and western Canada. The species has been listed as endangered in Washington since 1999. With only one known wild population remaining in the state, the frogs still have a long road to recovery.

“Every froglet is important,” said Heinzman. “Giving these frogs a head-start by raising them free of predators gives them a much better chance of survival in the wild. We’re very pleased to participate in this critical recovery effort to help save these endangered frogs.”

“We’re so appreciative of all the hard work by our partners at Northwest Trek on this northern leopard frog conservation project,” said Sean Dougherty, WDFW district wildlife biologist based out of Ephrata. “In addition to the captive rearing programs at Northwest Trek and Oregon Zoo, we have partners helping with habitat improvement and population monitoring, all in the interest of helping recover this species in Washington.”

Likely causes of the frogs’ decline in the Pacific Northwest include habitat loss and degradation, diseases, non-native species, and climate change.

According to WDFW officials, northern leopard frogs are an important indicator of water quality due to their permeable skin. Improving and conserving wetland habitat will help frogs and other species,

ranging from amphibians to waterfowl and deer.

WDFW is partnering with Northwest Trek, Washington State University, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Zoo to better understand population status and trends, improve habitat conditions, and reintroduce a northern leopard frog population to the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge.

Funding for the northern leopard frog reintroduction is provided through a competitive state wildlife grant awarded to WDFW from USFWS's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program and Potholes Supplemental Feed Route mitigation funds provided by Department of Ecology.

###