

Nature Notes

The Tree Frog



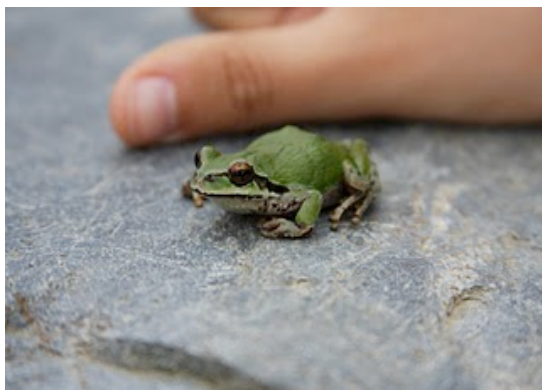
Who would have thought we have tree frogs much like the famous tropical forms here in Kimberley? Well we have and they may be the most abundant frog species in Western North America with a range from the Baja in California to southern British Columbia. The tree frog can live from sea level up to 3050 meters elevation in riparian habitats as well as woodlands, grasslands, chaparral, and urban backyards.

These little frogs grow to a maximum length of 5 cm and can vary in colour from green to brown with a pale or white belly. The skin is bumpy in texture. Recent evidence indicates they can change colour over a period of several weeks between green and brown and may even vary the pattern of colours to better match their surroundings. They can be recognized by their small size, their slender toes with sticky pads used for climbing, and a dark brown or black stripe from the nose across each eye back to the shoulder. They are mainly nocturnal and spend much of the day hiding under leaf litter or vegetation.

At night they emerge and use their toe pads to climb onto vegetation where they ambush their main food source, a variety of insects and spiders. The male will migrate to water in early spring and call to attract females. The female lays a cluster of 10-90 eggs in shallow, sheltered water. The male then fertilizes the eggs which will hatch into tadpoles in 1-3 weeks, emerging from the water from 2 to 5 months later as adults less than 1 cm long. They may live up to 9 years in captivity but in the wild most fall prey to predators like snakes or other reptiles, herons, or small mammals. Species such as garter snakes may depend upon the tree frog for their continued survival



*Green & brown colour form
(share3 photo)*



*Pacific tree frog in green form
(Austin Noddess photo)*

so the tree frog is considered to be a keystone species indicating the Biological health of a region. Most populations of tree frogs appear to be healthy at the moment but, like many species of amphibians, there has been a decline in their numbers.

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