



Archey's frog



Hamilton's frog

Native endangered frogs

New Zealand has four species of native frogs: Archey's frog, Hamilton's frog, Hochstetter's frog and the Maud Island frog. They all belong to the genus *Leiopelma*, a group of frogs that date back 70 million years without much change. These living fossils are small and nocturnal with excellent camouflage skills. Three of these species live in shady, moist forests on land; one lives on the edge of streams and is semi-aquatic.

New Zealand originally had seven species of native frogs, but three have gone extinct with the introduction of humans and pests, and if we do not take action, our remaining species might meet the same fate.

Two of our native frogs are currently endangered/critically endangered, the Archey's frog and Hamilton's frog. The other two are currently vulnerable.

What is threatening these frogs and many around the globe?

Frogs have very sensitive skin that can absorb substances in their environment. This makes them susceptible to disease, pollution, chemical poisons and environmental changes.

New Zealand frogs used to be spread across the country, but in the past 1000-2000 years, the populations have declined significantly. This is due to introduced pests such as rats and cats. Humans have also destroyed their forest habitats leaving them with few appropriate places to make a home.

Recently (the past 25 years), a disease has ravaged frog species around the globe. This is a fungus named Amphibian chytrid fungus. This fungus has been considered to play a significant role in the decline of frog populations. The fungus relies on damp environments to survive and spread; this happens to be the same environment that frogs thrive in. The disease can be spread from frog to frog or from contact with infected water/soil. People, animals or vehicles can spread the disease by moving infected soil and water around. This has made the amphibian chytrid fungus highly spreadable.

What can you do to help?

- Avoid touching frogs, because you may damage their sensitive skin. If you have a permit to touch them, make sure your hands are wet.
- Avoid spreading the amphibian chytrid fungus by avoiding visits to areas where native frogs are found.

If you need to visit native frog habitat, you must ensure all your footwear, gaiters, and equipment are clean and disinfected. (doc.govt.nz)
