

The Law

From Alaska Dept of Fish and Game:

Before any amphibian (or crayfish) can be imported into Alaska you must have:

1. A Fish Resource Permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
2. A health certificate from an out-of-state supplier that is approved by Alaska's Fish Pathologist.

Only amphibians classified as "ornamental species" can be imported or kept as pets. This is the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game's definition:

"Ornamental fish are tropical species common in the aquaria trade and not used for sport fishing purposes or raised for food. They are not thought capable of surviving in Alaska or of carrying disease organisms that could harm Alaska's fish resources. Under Alaska's legal definitions, the word "fish" includes amphibians, invertebrates and aquatic plants. The cultivation of ornamental species in Alaska is regulated under 5 AAC 41.070(c). This regulation also prohibits the release of unwanted organisms."

While there are many amphibian species that AHS considers highly dangerous to Alaska's Native species, the Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) is particularly threatening. This frog is highly invasive in many parts of North America and has done well in very cold climates. Adults and tadpoles alike are very large and aggressive toward other frog species, many of which they eat! Not only will they eat native frogs, they eat large quantities of other food items, making food difficult to find for the native species. In addition, bullfrogs are known to carry diseases such as chytridiomycosis and ranavirus which can spread rapidly to other frogs. Because they are not ornamental, they may be able to survive in Alaska, they can carry diseases, are typically unwanted organisms and can sometimes be raised for food, we consider them illegal to import into or sell within Alaska.

Alaska Herpetological Society



The Alaska Herpetological Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of Herpetology in the State of Alaska. Our mission is to promote sound research and management of amphibians and reptiles in the North, to foster responsible pet ownership and to provide opportunities in outreach, education, and citizen science for individuals who are interested in these species.

The Alaska Herpetological Society (AHS) supports ethical, responsible and legal ownership of herpetofauna in Alaska. We are working with pet owners and the pet industry to educate the public on the proper care of these species and to prevent the introduction of invasive species and diseases that could be detrimental to the state's native amphibians and reptiles.

WEB:

WWW.AKHERPSOCIETY.ORG

FACEBOOK:

ALASKA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MIDNIGHT SUN HERPETOCULTURE SOCIETY

The Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society is working to establish a state-wide support, education, advocacy, and rescue network for all amphibians, and reptiles within the state of Alaska.

FACEBOOK:

MIDNIGHT SUN HERPETOCULTURE SOCIETY

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

AS PETS



Photo by Melissa Walker

INFORMATION

This information on Amphibians and Reptiles as pets has been provided by the Alaska Herpetological Society, in coordination with Alaska Dept of Fish and Game and Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society.

See www.akherpsociety.org for more information.

OWN “HERPS” RESPONSIBLY!

Bullfrogs to Fight Alaska Mosquitoes

Seattle, Wash.—Alaska's mosquitoes, notorious as the enemy of the “sourdough,” will have a new foe next spring—the large Oregon bull frog.

This web footed creature will be introduced into the territory by the Alaska division of the United States bureau of education in an effort to aid miners and others to combat the pest. The big green and brown frog long has been noted in Oregon as the natural enemy of mosquitoes.

With the start of warm weather frogs will be shipped from Oregon to small islands of southeastern Alaska and planted in the deeper ponds. Small islands were chosen because results can be ascertained better.

If the experiment proves successful a general importation will follow. It is believed frogs can survive even the cold winter of northern Alaska.

Photo borrowed from the Woodville Republican, Feb. 23, 1929, Page 7

Bullfrogs were intentionally introduced across much of the western United States in the early 20th century. We do not know if this terrible experiment worked in Alaska, but luckily Bullfrogs are not widespread in the state! Unfortunately, Bullfrog tadpoles have been showing up recently at pet stores with fish shipments, and we fear that these will eventually be released. Please do not buy or raise Bullfrogs as pets!

Our organizations promote responsible pet ownership and we understand that having amphibian and reptile pets is a great way to learn about, respect, and care for these species. That said, imported pets can have devastating consequences for Alaska's native herps by outcompeting them, consuming them, and transmitting disease. If you choose to own a herp, please be sure to adhere to the following:

- Keep a pet for the duration of its life. They should never be released into the wild. Find a friend to take it, turn it into your local AK Dept. of Fish and Game office, or humanely euthanize the animal if you can no longer keep it!
- Only buy from reputable breeders that 1) are experienced with the species they sell, 2) keep clean facilities and enclosures, 3) are informative / communicative with customers, 4) adhere to safe shipping standards, 5) only sell captive bred animals, 6) only sell healthy animals and offer a Health Guarantee
- Understand the level of care, responsibility, costs, and expertise associated with your pet. Not all herps are the same and many require in-depth knowledge to keep them alive and healthy. Read about the species you plan to obtain before buying, and know what vets in your area are able to care for them!
- Never take an amphibian or reptile from the wild as a pet. This is not only illegal, but it can harm breeding populations, change population genetics and promote the spread of disease. Look at, photograph, and enjoy wild amphibians without handling or taking them!
- Always dispose of your pet's waste, habitat materials and water appropriately. If possible, expose these items to a 5% bleach solution before throwing them out. This will help prevent the spread of disease!
- Know local, state, federal and intentional restrictions on amphibian and reptile pets in your area!

INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive species are a real threat to Alaska's native species. Sometimes animals are released intentionally by humans and sometimes unintentionally (they escape or travel in cargo). Either way, it is important that we do our best to stop the import and release of non-native animals in Alaska.

Both amphibians and reptiles have been released in Alaska and we are unsure how much damage they have caused. With an increase in population, a growing pet trade, and greater import of goods, the risk of herp introductions is likely to increase. Please report all non-native herp observations to AHS or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game!



Photo by Misti Wright

Facts:

- Red-legged Frogs were introduced to Chichagof Island and are doing well. Locals report severe declines in native frog populations in this area
- Pacific Chorus Frogs were introduced on Revillagigedo Island and the population is stable. We have since found these frogs in Juneau, Sitka, Wrangell and even Anchorage.
- Red-eared Sliders have been found in ponds around Anchorage and Fairbanks. At least one is thought to have over-wintered successfully.
- A snapping turtle was found in a pond near Homer. Coincidentally (or not), locals report a decline in the pond's frog population.
- Garter snakes have been found in Fairbanks, Kenai, Soldotna, Kasilof, Haines, Petersburg, Wrangell, and elsewhere... All are thought to be released pets.
- An American Alligator was found in a roadside ditch in Chugiak in 2013.
- Six Blue-spotted Salamanders were released in the Chugiak area in 2012 and at least one over-wintered successfully. One of these is pictured above!