FRESHWATER LIFE

Saving the world's most endangered freshwater species

Yellow-legged Frog

Humanity’s longest lasting impact will be the loss of species we drive to extinction. Fortunately, most extinctions can be prevented with smart conservation. For us this means focusing on freshwaters - 0.8% of Earth’s surface, but 10% of all biodiversity and 27% of all extinctions - and invasive species, responsible for 41% of freshwater extinctions. Freshwater invasive species can often be eradicated after which even species on the edge of extinction can recover. This tool can save an estimated 2-5% of Earth’s most Endangered species.

In Yosemite National Park, we are working with the National Park Service and the UC, Santa Barbara Mountain Lakes Research Group to protect the Endangered Northern Mountain Yellow-legged Frog. It used to be the most common frog in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, but invasive trout eat adults and tadpoles, and wiped them out in countless lakes. Then came infectious Chytrid fungus which nearly destroyed the few remaining populations. Fortunately, our partners started eradicating trout from a few small lakes in the Park, and when they did, the frog population started to recover; even with Chytrid fungus!

Now we are managing fish eradication for the park, employing a diverse team of young conservationists from the University of California’s CAMINO and Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Programs. For $100,000 we can make another fish free lake to which Yellow-legged frogs can be reintroduced. This work can be expanded beyond Yosemite National Park to protect perhaps 10 similarly threatened frog species across North America.

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