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Southern Leopard Frog (*Rana sphenocephala*)

Southern Leopard frogs, which are also called meadow frogs and grass frogs, are a collection of true frogs within the genus *Rana*. Once abundant in North America, their population has declined in recent years because of pollution and deforestation. Leopard frogs are often used as environmental indicator species because of their heightened sensitivity to chemical pollutants found in the air and water, and they are commonly used as dissection specimens in biology classrooms.

The Southern Leopard Frog is generally green or light brown in color, with dark brown or black blotching (that is the origin of their common name). They grow to 3½ inches (90 mm) in length and have a pointed snout. This species prefers shallow, freshwater habitats, such as streams, ponds or lakes, with plenty of vegetation for camouflage.

They are mostly nocturnal, and carnivorous, consuming almost any kind of insect they can catch and fit in their mouth, including earthworms, spiders and centipedes. They are excellent jumpers, and typically escape predation by leaping into the water and swimming to the bottom. Breeding occurs year around, as long as the temperature permits. Eggs are laid in a clutch of several hundred at the bottom of shallow water. Tadpoles hatch and remain in the fully aquatic form for approximately 90 days, feeding on algae and rotting plant matter. Males have two vocal sacs, located on both sides of the body, used to attract mates and establish territory. The male has larger forelimbs than the female.

Leopard frogs in captivity must be kept in a mostly aquatic terrarium with tap water. These frogs can be enjoyed by observation, and should be handled infrequently.

Please wash hands with soap and water after handling.