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The Mink Frog, *Rana septentrionalis*, in Southeastern Labrador

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Mink Frogs (*Rana septentrionalis*) were collected at three new localities in southeastern Labrador in 2003 and 2005, extending the known range of the species about 200 km to the east, to the limits of the coast.

La Grenouille du Nord (*Rana septentrionalis*) a été trouvée dans trois nouvelles localités dans le sud-est du Labrador en 2003 et 2005. Ces mentions élargissent l'aire de répartition connue de l'espèce d'environ 200 km vers l'est, aux limites de la côte de l'Océan Atlantique.

Key Words: Mink Frog, *Rana septentrionalis*, range, Labrador.

The Mink Frog (*Rana septentrionalis*) has the most northerly southern limit of any North American anuran (Hedeen 1986). This southern limit ranges from southern Manitoba and northern Minnesota, south and east through Wisconsin, northern Michigan and southern Ontario, then northeast through northern New York, northern New England, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia (Conant and Collins 1998; Cook 1984; Hedeen 1986). The species has recently been introduced on the island of Newfoundland (Warkentin et al. 2003). Its northern limit remains poorly known, largely because the species is particularly aquatic (Hedeen 1986) and its call and appearance are unfamiliar to many observers. In Labrador, the Mink Frog has been documented from several scattered localities, though not from the extreme north or southeast (Maunder 1983, 1997; Cook 1984; Desroches and Rodrigue 2004).

In 2003, during a primarily botanical and malacological field trip for the Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador (JEM), and in 2005, during a vacation trip (J-FD and IP), we surveyed ponds and brooks along all of the main roads and smaller town access roads of southeastern Labrador, as far to the northeast as the town of Cartwright.

On 3 August 2003 a single adult Mink Frog, found freshly dead from unknown causes, was collected (NFM HE-250) from the shoreline of a medium-sized pond, located beside the access highway running between the Trans-Labrador Highway and the town of Cartwright, about 39.5 km southwest of the road junction to the town of Paradise River (53°09'52"N; 57°31'56"W). This locality was, at the time, about 100 km east of the known range of the species (number 1 in Figure 1). The water of the pond was clear.

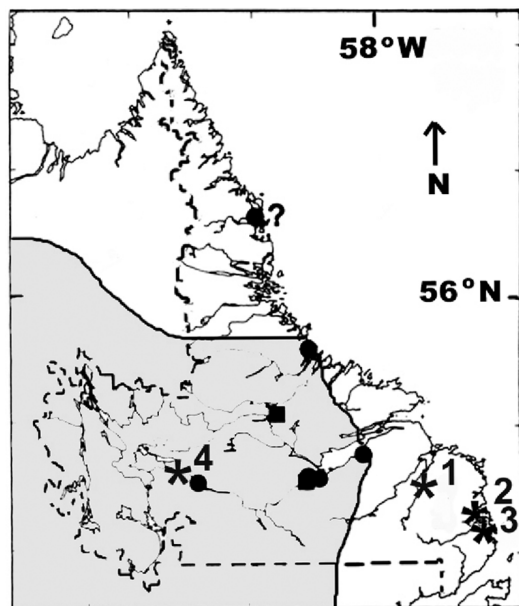


FIGURE 1. The Mink Frog in Labrador. Previous records: dots (Maunder 1983) and squares (Maunder 1997). Question mark: Questionable record (see Maunder 1983: 42, 44). Gray zone: proposed distribution based on previous records (Bleakney 1958; Cook 1984; Desroches and Rodrigue 2004). Stars: New records in southeastern Labrador (1: southwest of Paradise River, 2: Charlottetown, 3: St. Lewis, 4: east of Churchill Falls). Broken line: Labrador/Québec border.

The dominant emergent plants were Yellow Pondlily (*Nuphar variegata*), Narrowleaf Bur-reed (*Sparganium angustifolium*), and Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*). The shoreline of the pond was mainly gravelly, over a boulder substrate, and was well-vegetated. The surrounding habitat was *Kalmia* scrub heath, with patches and strips of low Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*) woods in more sheltered areas.

In 2005, Mink Frogs were observed at two additional localities in southeastern Labrador, about 200 km east of the former known range of the species (numbers 2 and 3 in Figure 1). On 11 July, a subadult Mink Frog was collected (CMN-35805) from a small pond located beside a gravel road in the town of Charlottetown (52°46'09"N; 56°06'59"W). The pond was about 60 × 15 m in size, and had clear water, a muddy bottom, and grassy and rocky shores. Trees at the site were mostly Black Spruce. On 18 July, two Mink Frog tadpoles were collected (CMN-35810) by dipnetting at Blue Hill Pond, St. Lewis (52°24'55"N; 55°55'45"W). The pond had clear water, a sandy and rocky bottom, and some emergent plants near the shore. It was bordered by Sweet Gale (*Myrica gale*) and alder (*Alnus* sp.), and the adjacent forest was dominated by Black Spruce. Two Threespine Sticklebacks (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) were caught in the same habitat, but released.

In 2004, an additional observation of the Mink Frog was recorded at St. Lewis by Christian Fortin (Fortin 2005) but no voucher specimen was collected (C. Fortin, personal communication).

In 2005, Mink Frogs were also observed in western Labrador, near the site of an old record, along the Trans-Labrador Highway, east of the town of Churchill Falls (53°29'29"N; 63°40'06"W) (number 4 in Figure 1). Two adults and one subadult were collected (CMN-35798). Although this observation is not a range extension it is included here because it is a new collection record.

During our searches for amphibians in southeastern Labrador, the only other species observed was American Toad (*Bufo americanus*). Tadpoles of this species were seen and/or collected at five locations along the roads.

The new Mink Frog collections recorded in this paper show that the species is more widespread in southeastern Labrador than has been previously documented. Further Labrador surveys should emphasize areas north of the presently known distribution of the species.

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