



ARIZONA-SONORA  
**DESERT  
MUSEUM**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Tarahumara frogs return to Pajarito Mountains after 40-year absence**

PHOENIX -- Hundreds of Tarahumara frogs hopped into their new home in southern Arizona's Pajarito Mountains today after a 40-year absence, thanks to a recovery effort by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (Museum), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. About 550 frogs that were reared at the Museum were backpacked into a remote canyon to be released.



Previously known to exist in only three mountain ranges in Arizona and having been extirpated from the state in the 1980s, active management of this species has been occurring to the north of the Pajarito Mountains for more than a decade. Establishing a population in the Pajaritos will repatriate the Tarahumara frog to two of the three historical mountain ranges and prevent the need for

protection under the Endangered Species Act.

"It's exciting to bring a species back to its historical home after such a long absence," said Abigail King, ranid frogs project specialist for the Game and Fish Department. "Through our proactive recovery effort, we are working to repatriate the frogs to several areas and grow those populations to a robust level where they are self-sustaining and no longer require management."

The released frogs will be monitored by biologists regularly over the next several years. In addition, the population may be augmented with additional frogs until it is determined that the population has become established in the canyon and no longer requires active management.

The Desert Museum has been engaged in this recovery effort since its inception and has produced thousands of frogs for reintroduction.

The Museum's General Curator Stephane Poulin said, "Seeing these animals returned to the wild is rewarding and makes our investment of countless hours breeding and caring for these animals over twenty years all worthwhile."

Prior to release, the frogs and their captive facility were assessed for pathogens to prevent the spread of disease. The results came back negative for chytridiomycosis, an amphibian disease that has impacted amphibian populations worldwide.

The Tarahumara frog is a medium-sized frog that grows up to 4 ½ inches. They are greenish-brown with small dark spots on the body. They are highly aquatic, and require permanent pools of water for both their larval and adult stages. The frogs prefer boulder-strewn perennial streams and seasonal streams with bedrock beds that include deep, drought-resistant plunge pools.



The recovery effort is supported in part by the Heritage Fund, a voter-passed initiative to further conservation efforts in the state including protecting endangered species, educating our children about wildlife, helping urban residents to better coexist with wildlife and creating new opportunities for outdoor recreation. Funding comes from Arizona Lottery ticket sales.

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