

Graduating Barrett student helped save threatened Arizona amphibian

By Risa Aria Schnebly, ASU News
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Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

The ponds and streams between Arizona and New Mexico were once teeming with the snore-like croak of a unique endemic amphibian: the Chiricahua leopard frog. But after years of drought, many of the water sources that the frogs rely on have dried up. Combined with the spread of chytrid fungus, a fungus that's wiped out amphibian populations around the world, the number of charismatic leopard frogs has been rapidly declining.

Raedon Anderson, a graduating Barrett, the Honors College student, first learned about the Chiricahua leopard frogs as an intern with the Arizona Department of Game and Fish, which monitors the remaining frog populations and works to restore their former habitat. During her summer as an intern, she spent days camping next to remote backcountry streams, catching tadpoles, restoring wetlands or removing bullfrogs to help protect the threatened species.

"Just being able to work with something that's endangered or threatened was very meaningful to me," Anderson said. "It made me want to go into conservation ecology."

Inspired by the experience, Anderson asked her supervisor at Game and Fish, Audrey Owens, if she could conduct research to help their conservation efforts even after her internship officially ended. As a result, she's spent the last year statistically analyzing years of survey data to figure out when Chiricahua leopard frogs lay the most eggs in different locations around the state, and what environmental factors might affect that.

"It was pretty intense. I've never done research like that, but it was interesting as well," she said.

Anderson identified the frogs' two peak breeding seasons: in early spring (March to April) and right after monsoon season (August to October). Having that information can help direct Game and Fish's future monitoring efforts, Anderson explains, as teams can save time by only going out to count frog egg masses during the times of year when they're most abundant.

Anderson also investigated how temperature affected the frogs' breeding patterns. Specifically, she found that higher annual temperatures can make the spring breeding season start earlier in the year. That might allow the frogs more opportunities to lay eggs, helping the population grow. But that comes at a cost: higher annual temperatures also led to the frogs laying less eggs during the summer breeding season, potentially contributing to the species' decline.

"Climate change is expected to really impact temperature patterns, and so using this research, (Game and Fish) can mitigate the effects of climate change for the species," she said.

Because Anderson conducted the research in collaboration with Game and Fish, her data could inform the department's monitoring and mitigation efforts as soon as next year.

Anderson's work with the Chiricahua leopard frogs wasn't her first time getting up close and personal with crazy critters. She's volunteered to do research on campus with bees, salamanders and lizards before, plus has been a long-time volunteer at several local dog rescues. But Anderson's work with the Chiricahua leopard frogs was impressive for another reason: Prior to her internship, Anderson had only gone camping once before.

"(On the first night of camping), I remember laying there and I was like, 'I don't know if I can do this,'" she recalls. "But eventually, I learned that I really enjoyed it. We were in the middle of nowhere in these beautiful places and you could see the stars. It was really, really peaceful."

Since then, Anderson has become an avid outdoors person. This past summer, she also worked as a field technician monitoring freshwater turtles for Sequoia National Park.

"I spent a whole summer snorkeling in rivers, hand-grabbing turtles, like pulling them out of rocks and under roots," Anderson said.

That job made a huge impression on Anderson, who's hoping to keep working with turtles in the future, either as a graduate student or entering the conservation workforce.

On top of conducting research at an impressive level of depth and quality for an undergraduate student and racking up a wide variety of volunteer and work experiences, Anderson is also a recipient of the ASU [Moeur Award](#) for maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Whatever path she pursues next, she's sure to be a success.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Raedon Anderson conducted research about the breeding patterns of the endangered Chiricahua leopard frog, pictured here. Courtesy photo

Text image(s)



Raedon Anderson holding a northwestern pond turtle in Sequoia National Park. Courtesy photo