

Habitat preference of a new invasive species in Wallonia: the bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*)

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Lithobates catesbeianus has been observed in Wallonia since 1992 (de Wavrin, 2007). So far, no study was designed to characterise its distribution and habitat use. This is, however, important since *L. catesbeianus* is considered by the IUCN as one of the hundred worst invasive species in the world (Lowe et al., 2000). Bullfrog distribution and habitat preferences were studied in Wallonia during the summer 2008, with a focus on the surroundings of the two population cores reported in Wallonia, at Ransart (Charleroi) and in the Dyle valley (Brabant Wallon). 22 sites were carefully monitored to search for adults and tadpoles. Multivariate analyses were computed to identify which variable combination best explains their presence. Our results show that *L. catesbeianus* is present in a very limited number of water bodies close to introduction sites and that reproduction only occurs in 3 ponds, which suggest that invasion is still at a very early stage. *L. catesbeianus* seems to prefer eutrophic and turbid waters colonised by fish, usually with the presence of helophytes. Due to its strong negative impact on biodiversity and its very limited distribution range in Wallonia, early eradication of bullfrog is strongly recommended.

Martin, Y. (2009) *Lithobates catesbeianus*, une nouvelle espèce invasive en Wallonie: distribution, habitat et régime alimentaire. Mémoire de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, pp. 81.

Branquart, E., Laudelout, A., Louette G., Martin Y. & Percsy C. (2009). Harmonia database: *Rana catesbeiana*. Harmonia version 1.2, Belgian Forum on Invasive Species.

