



Mountain Chicken (*Leptodactylus fallax*),

Laura Hampton — Available at both A3 (11.7" x 16.5") and A4 (8.3" x 11.7") paper sizes

The critically endangered Mountain Chicken (*Leptodactylus fallax*), or "Giant Ditch Frog," is a large (up to 210 mm SVL), robust anuran native to the Caribbean islands of Dominica and Montserrat. With an average lifespan of 12 years, it reaches breeding maturity at roughly three years of age. Unlike most anurans, which breed in water, this frog deposits its eggs within a terrestrial foam nest in underground burrows about 50 cm deep. This occurs in April during heavy seasonal rainfall. Once the eggs have developed, the adult female will lay many unfertilized eggs to feed her brood. The female will then guard them until they are fully developed and they leave the safety of the burrow.

Unfortunately, like many amphibian species, the Mountain Chicken frog is suffering declines from chytrid fungus. There are other factors contributing to its decline including natural catastrophic events, such as volcano eruptions, as well as mass consumption for food by humans (this frog is the national dish of Dominica) and habitat loss for agricultural practices. In addition, this species has a low reproductive rate and reaches sexual maturity later than many frog species. Due to these impacts, the Mountain Chicken is estimated to have declined by 80% within the past ten years.

There are now several organizations working to save this species. Although hunting is now banned and there are projects in place to help increase populations, there are still only two breeding projects outside Dominica. One of these is at London Zoo,

with a successful captive breeding program; the other is a private collector in the United States working with a small collection of frogs.

Laura Hampton is 24 years old and has been drawing and painting her entire life, typically working with nature-based subject matter.

Her current personal preference for animal-based pieces includes a mix of different media. The Mountain Chicken Frog piece presented here began with a water color pencil base, and then colored pencil was used for detail. Finally, acrylics were used to add stronger colors and highlights and shading for a bold, eye-catching appearance.

Laura produced this Mountain Chicken Frog piece to help raise money and awareness for the conservation of the species as part of an ongoing project coordinated by the Dominican Mountain Chicken Frog Project. Fifty percent of profits from sales of prints will be donated to that project.

Laura offers commission work, from pet portraits to book illustrations, and has current work for sale, including Mountain Chicken Frog prints, at www.facebook.com/lauraaprilart. She can also be contacted via laura.april.h@gmail.com for more information.