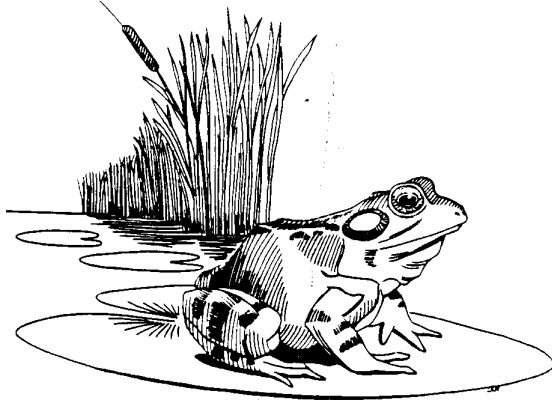




Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Division
Natural Heritage Program

Michigan Frog Survey Update



Overwhelming Response to Call for Volunteers

There are currently 460 routes registered throughout the state. This is an overwhelming response to our call for frog survey volunteers! I have talked with coordinators in other states and most are finding it difficult to find enough people to volunteer. Perhaps that says a lot about Michiganians - we care about our natural resources.

Data Summaries

You will find data summaries enclosed with this update. You will notice that the state has been split into four zones instead of two and suggested survey dates for each zone are not included. Examine the data and the charts and you will see when you need to go out in your particular area of the state.

This first year is only an inventory of frog species of the state. Its also a learning year for myself and all of you. The data isn't going to mean much until we have several years of data under our belts so that year to year comparisons can be made. The low numbers of some of the species are not necessarily anything to be concerned about at this point.

The spring was late in coming, and its difficult to tell what effect the weather had on calling rates. Weather and habitat data will be analyzed in a later report.


The calling phenologies were calculated by averaging the index on each date. Some species have more points because they were found more frequently. Some high points and low points resulted when only one or two observations were made on that date. You should look at the range of dates when each species was calling at or near peak when deciding when to survey.

There seems to be some confusion...

The quality of the data being returned is amazing. Anyone who has worked with a large group of people knows that getting an idea across so that they do something correctly, is fairly difficult. There are always those that do things their own way. The majority of data sheets being returned are completed correctly and neatly and I appreciate that very much. There are some areas, however, that seem to have been the source of confusion.

1. When recording observations on the data sheet, only record the **index number** as described in your instructions (i.e. 1,2,3). Recording the number of individuals is not necessary. There is a reference to recording the number of individuals on the training tape. You can ignore this - that portion of the tape was taken from another project that is counting the number of individual frogs.

2. Once you have established a site at a wetland that represents good habitat for frogs, **do not move or abandon that site**. This is a very, very important point. In order to get trend data, observations must be taken at the same sites, year after year. The only reason you should abandon a site is if you cannot do the survey for some reason (i.e. too much noise to hear, road is too busy to stop, etc.). You should not abandon a site because you didn't hear frogs or you didn't hear interesting species of frogs. You may hear more frogs there next year. Every time you move a site the trend analysis for that site and your route has to start

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from ground zero again. It is expected that this first year a lot of route adjustments will be made but I'm hoping they're for good reasons. Ideally, a route should be chosen on a map, then driven to locate the wetlands along the route near which to place sites and not changed except for the reasons listed above.

3. This spring was an unusual one all over the state. We had a winter that hung on forever. This, obviously, skewed the dates for doing frog surveys. The dates listed in the instructions are merely suggested dates when the appropriate weather conditions **usually** occur in the different regions of the state. The weather conditions are much more important to consider when trying to determine when to go out and do a survey. If the minimum temperatures are not reached before the end of the suggested time range then you simply must wait for the temperatures to rise. When you think about it, it only makes sense. Frogs don't have calendars, they wait for Mother Nature to tell them when they should get started.

Now, there are some limitations to this. Obviously, you're not going to wait until July to do your first route, because you'll miss all the early-callers. In unusual years, it's going to take a little effort on your part to determine when there may be a good time. You may end up doing a survey when the temperature is close but not quite what it should be and there are some frogs calling. You'll get the feel of this with experience. Just try not to do surveys less than two weeks apart. Suggestions on temperature and date can be made, but what really counts is a combination of the two that gets the little buggers going in the spring.

Wetlands Violations

Please read the enclosed information about evaluating and reporting wetlands violations. The Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act protects wetlands that are contiguous to larger water bodies or 5 acres in size if they are isolated. If you think you may have seen a violation, this information will help you decide if you need to report it and to whom.

Frog Observer ID

Having problems with strange looks and policeman stopping to ask you what the heck you're doing? We have frog observer identification signs that will be available soon. This was a suggestion from a volunteer and I agreed that that was a very

needed item. They are 8X10 signs printed on cardboard stock so that you can stick them in your car window or hold it while you're standing and listening. They include the DNR logo and the words "Michigan Department of Natural Resources". Hopefully, this will satisfy those nervous neighbors and police officers. Each observer that indicates they want to continue the survey will receive one sign with their 1997 data forms.

Looking Ahead to 1997

Enclosed with this update you will find a stamped, self-addressed postcard. Please complete and return it by December 1, 1996. A similar postcard will be sent each year to determine participation with the Michigan Frog and Toad Survey and at what level. Data forms for the following year will not be sent to observers that do not return the card or contact me otherwise. Please consider item #5 carefully. It has been my policy to not release the name of any without the individual's permission to do so. I have had requests from the media to talk with specific volunteers about their survey and maybe tag along with them on a survey. If it is okay with you to supply them your name and telephone number then check the first box. I have also had requests from observers to know who else in their area is participating in the survey so they can get together and discuss results, calls, etc. If this is okay with you then check the second box.

These postcards will help save postage costs by only sending information to those who are interested in receiving it.

Help Wanted

If there is anyone out there who wants to get even more involved with the survey, here is your chance. Since this survey has been so popular and there are so many volunteers to coordinate, it has become difficult for one person to do effectively. I am looking for someone from each zone defined on the enclosed map to volunteer to be a regional coordinator. The basic duties would be to act as a local contact for observers with questions or problems, to verify unusual observations or an uncertain call, and to help recruit new volunteers to adopt abandoned routes or set up new ones in vacant areas. I'm sure there are many other duties that an ambitious coordinator could probably imagine which would be welcome and encouraged. I would still be handling all data collection and

analysis, general mailings, route verifications, etc. from the Lansing Wildlife Division office.

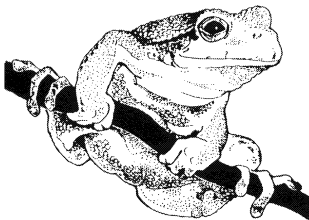
The busiest time of the year would be approximately from February to July. I don't anticipate much of anything going on during the rest of the year. If multiple volunteers are identified from the same zone, I will choose the individual with the most experience with frog calls and/or wildlife surveys. If interested, send a letter of interest describing your experience to:
Lori Sargent, MDNR, Wildlife Division, PO Box 30180, Lansing, MI 48909. FAX number - (517) 373-6705. E-mail address - sargentl@wildlife.dnr.state.mi.us.

Valuable Reference

An excellent reference on wetlands and wetland management is a new publication written and distributed by Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. It is called "Living with Michigan's Wetlands: A Landowner's Guide". You don't have to own land or have wetlands on your land to find this book valuable. There are many suggestions provided that you can do to help Michigan's wetlands. The Michigan Frog and Toad Survey is one of the projects mentioned. The book is free of charge but the Council asks that you pay \$5.00 for shipping and handling. Send a check or money order to Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, PO Box 300, Conway, MI 49722. They have a limited number of copies so order soon!

One Last Note

When returning completed data forms, please do **not** include a copy or description of your route unless there are changes. If so, please indicate the change(s). I have a copy of each route on file, unless I have indicated to you otherwise.



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