

Fungal Disease Responsible for Amphibian Declines

Infectious diseases are a leading cause of amphibian population decline. Chytridiomycosis, a disease caused by the fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (*Bd*), is thought to be the principal infectious disease contributing to mass die-offs of amphibians. Wild amphibians have been found with *Bd* infections on all continents except Antarctica - the only continent without amphibians. Environmental factors such as temperature, altitude, humidity, water pH, light, oxygen concentration, and population density may increase the virulence of the disease. Be careful not to spread this or other potentially dangerous amphibian diseases. Do not handle multiple frogs at any given site or move frogs from one wetland to another. Learn more about *Bd* at www.parcplace.org/Bd_conference.html.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Learn more about FrogWatch USA or sharpen your skills at a FrogWatch training session. Contact trainers for details and let us know about other upcoming sessions.

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Karst Farm Park (Ind.)
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Featured Species



American toad (*Bufo americanus*)

The American toad is widespread throughout eastern North America, extending from Manitoba, Canada, south through the Appalachian Mountains and as far west as Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wisconsin. This species can be found in a variety of habitats from mowed lawns to woodland forests. American toads breed between March and July, depending on location. Their call is a musical trill lasting up to 30 seconds. This frog may already be calling in the southern and middle parts of the U.S. and will soon be calling in the northeastern U.S. Has anyone heard it yet? If you have heard it or other frogs, be sure to share the news with Mandy (mgaudreau@rwpzoo.org)!

American toads have two enlarged glands on the side of the neck that secrete a viscous white poison. This poison can be dangerous to pets, so be sure to discourage pets from eating or mouthing these amphibians. People who have handled these toads, or any amphibian, should avoid touching their eyes and mouths until they have washed their hands.

EARLY SPRING AMPHIBIANS VIDEO

Check out this video on early spring amphibians by Jesse Rothacker. The clip was shot in central Pennsylvania on 27 February, around 8 pm.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6_S8LoDiSk

Amphibian Conservation at Zoos & Aquariums

Learn how accredited zoos and aquariums around the country are protecting amphibians at: www.aza.org/YearoftheFrog/AmphibianNews.

News from Around the Country

- On 5 March it warmed up enough in NW Arkansas for Ginger to hear her first bullfrogs, tree frogs, and spring peepers.
- Lou in Providence, R.I. is hearing wood frogs and saw spotted salamanders.
- Donald from Indiana is hearing peepers at the northern Eel River

"We are starved for rain in California, but when it does, frogs go nuts!" During the first week of March at sunset, Nicholas Steele went and listened to frogs at the Santa Ynez Canyon Floor in Pacific Palisades. "There were so many Pacific tree frogs singing it sounded like they were recording a CD! Intermittently a few African clawed frogs* also chimed in. It was really fun to hear nature healthy and happy."



Photo by Christine Steele; Nicholas out FrogWatching.

Tip 1: Turn Your Backyard into an Amphibian Haven

Turn an old cracked flower pot upside down. If the pot doesn't have a crack big enough for a toad, use a rock to elevate one side so that toads are able to enter and exit safely. Place the toad house in the shade near water. If you don't have a pond in your backyard a shallow saucer of water will work. Be sure to place the toad house on the dirt as toads love to dig. Finally, watch the toads gather! Learn more at: www.aza.org/YearoftheFrog/Documents/YOTF_Toad_Abode.pdf.

TRAINING MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Want to host a training session but don't know how to get started? Or just want some more info about participating in FrogWatch USA? FrogWatch USA has a number of updated materials to help get you started. Contact mgaudreau@rwpzoo.org.

Featured Invasive Species*



African clawed frogs (*Xenopus laevis*)

The African clawed Frogs (ACF) is an amazing animal that has been used extensively for medical research. Unfortunately, after being brought to the U.S. from Africa in the 1960s for use in human pregnancy test, ACFs were released from laboratories and pet stores and now have established populations in southern California and a few other localized areas. ACFs carry the deadly *Bd* fungus and are thought to be the main culprit for spreading *Bd* around the world. ACFs are voracious predators and eat anything that fits in their mouths, including native amphibians. This species is a major threat to native ecosystems.

LEARN MORE AND ENTER DATA AT FROGWATCH.ORG

Become familiar with the frog calls heard in your area, brush up on your frog-listening skills, and learn more about amphibian declines and what you can do to protect all amphibians? Check out the FrogWatch USA Web site at: www.frogwatch.org. This Web site will be hosted by the National Wildlife Federation throughout the 2009 FrogWatching season and will continue to serve as the site for you to enter your FrogWatching data.

We want to hear from you!

Please share your FrogWatching experiences with us and your fellow FrogWatch Volunteers! Send your stories and photos to mgaudreau@rwpzoo.org, and you may see yourself in an upcoming FrogWatch newsletter! The newsletter will be published twice a month throughout the FrogWatching season and can be accessed at www.aza.org/frogwatch.