



Wood Frog. Copyright R. Andrew Odum, Toledo Zoo

www.aza.org/frogwatch-newsletters

MARCH 2012

Greetings FrogWatch USA™ Volunteers

With the change in daylight savings time, the sun is staying out longer and the evening stillness of winter is replaced by loud choruses of calling frogs advertising for mates.

The mild winter we had in many parts of the country has species calling and breeding a few weeks earlier than in recent years. The earliest arrivals to wetlands such as wood frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*), spring peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*), and species in the western chorus frog complex (*P. triseriata* complex), have already made their presence known to FrogWatch USA volunteers in Missouri, Indiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, and southern Pennsylvania. More recently, American toads (*Anaxyrus americanus*) have joined the chorus. FrogWatch USA volunteers in California and Washington State have reported observations of species in the Pacific treefrog complex (*P. regilla* complex).

The FrogWatch USA season is from February through August and it is time to monitor the frogs and toads at your local wetland sites!

We're Growing by Leaps and Bounds

We are expanding our network of chapters, volunteers, and wetland sites. Twelve (12) chapters have formed since the update in the September 2011 newsletter, and we now count more than 45 FrogWatch USA chapters! There are newly-established chapters in California (Santa Barbara), Oklahoma (Tulsa), Nebraska (Bellevue), Kansas (Wichita, Cheyenne Bottoms), Ohio (Cleveland), Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, Erie, Philadelphia), New York (Staten Island, Buffalo), and Virginia (Norfolk), and we are preparing to welcome even more chapters thanks to the online and in-person training opportunities made possible by a National Science Foundation Informal Science Education grant.

You can view a full list of chapters and locate a volunteer training near you by visiting www.aza.org/become-a-frogwatch-volunteer/.

Host a FrogWatch USA Chapter & Become a Chapter Coordinator

If you are part of an organization that would be interested in forming a FrogWatch USA Chapter, please contact frogwatch@aza.org.

Details on requirements for hosting a chapter and information on upcoming training opportunities are available online: www.aza.org/host-a-frogwatch-chapter/.

Turn in Your Data to AZA

Site registration forms and observation datasheets should be submitted as soon as they are completed to frogwatch@aza.org or mailed to:

FrogWatch USA National Coordinator
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314



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Preparing for the 2012 FrogWatch Monitoring Season

Welcome new volunteers and a special welcome back and thank you to returning volunteers. It is your previous experience and leadership in the FrogWatch USA community that sustains and cultivates the program! Whether a new volunteer or a veteran to FrogWatch USA, there are five easy steps to prepare you for the season:

- 1. Review the FrogWatch USA monitoring protocols.** Check in with your chapter coordinator and refer to your Volunteer Manual. A copy of the protocol is available online. Print it and take it with you on monitoring visits. The protocols must be followed as specified to standardize the dataset across the nation and maximize its scientific value.
- 2. Print copies of the site registration form and observational datasheet.** The site registration form is needed if you are registering a new wetland site. If you are returning to a site you have monitored previously, you should review the form for accuracy. It is not necessary to register a site more than once, but be consistent and use the same site name during every monitoring visit to that registered wetland. An observational datasheet is filled out every time you visit a site to conduct monitoring. When monitoring, be sure to fill it out completely. Only record the calls of frogs and toads during a three (3) minute period each visit.
- 3. Gather your equipment.** Volunteers should bring: 1) a copy of the protocol, 2) blank observation datasheets, 3) pencils or pens, 4) a clipboard or notebook, 5) a timer, stopwatch, or watch with a second hand, 6) a thermometer, 7) a flashlight or headlamp (with extra batteries), and 8) a cell phone. It is recommended that volunteers also bring a first aid kit, rain gear, and amphibian field guides.
- 4. Practice identifying the calls of local frog and toad species.** Refresh your memory about the frog and toad calls you will hear in your area by reviewing the Frogs and Toads by State List and then practice your call identification skills throughout the season by taking the U.S. Geological Survey's Frog Quiz. Consult with your chapter coordinator for additional resources and schedule a certification assessment when you are ready to demonstrate your identification skills.

5. Plan your monitoring visits and watch the weather. FrogWatch USA is an evening protocol and monitoring visits must occur at least 30 minutes after sunset and conclude by 1:00 am. Frog and toad calling and breeding activity is closely linked to the weather conditions; therefore, it is not appropriate to monitor during inclement weather, specifically periods of freezing temperatures, snow, hail, heavy rain, and high winds. FrogWatch USA volunteers are encouraged to visit monitoring sites twice a week throughout the frog and toad breeding season of February through August. It is important that you continue to monitor all season long to capture a representation of the frog and toad community at your registered wetland. Choosing the best conditions for monitoring will optimize your time and enhance your experience. Before you depart for a monitoring visit, notify someone and let them know when you expect to return.

Do You Like the New Look of the FrogWatch USA Newsletter?

This fresh layout is only one of the exciting updates new to FrogWatch USA in 2012. On Leap Day (February 29) we jumped into social media and hope you will support us! We invite and encourage volunteers and chapter coordinators to share photos and experiences during their participation in FrogWatch USA.

“Like” us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/FrogWatchUSA
View the Flickr Photostream: www.flickr.com/frogwatchusa
Join the Flickr Group: www.flickr.com/groups/frogwatchusa
Follow us on Twitter: **COMING SOON!**

Species Complexes



The New Jersey Chorus Frog (Pseudacris kalmi) is one of the first species to be heard calling in the spring and are part of the western chorus frog species complex. Copyright Will Lattea.

A species complex is a group of closely related species. The edges of ranges for individual species may be poorly understood or cryptic, and in some cases individual species will interbreed or hybridize.

Some examples of species complexes you may encounter during FrogWatch USA monitoring are:

- Fowler's/Woodhouse's Toad (*Anaxyrus fowleri/woodhousii* complex)
- Cope's Gray/Gray Treefrog (*Hyla chrysoscelis/H. vericolor* complex)
- Pacific Treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla* complex)
- Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata* complex)

If you are monitoring in an area where ranges overlap and do not know which species within a complex you are hearing, you should record the species complex name above.

Remember, if you are not confident with your identification, do not guess and record the species. Instead, make a comment in the “Additional Notes” section of the datasheet.