

2011 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT



Preface

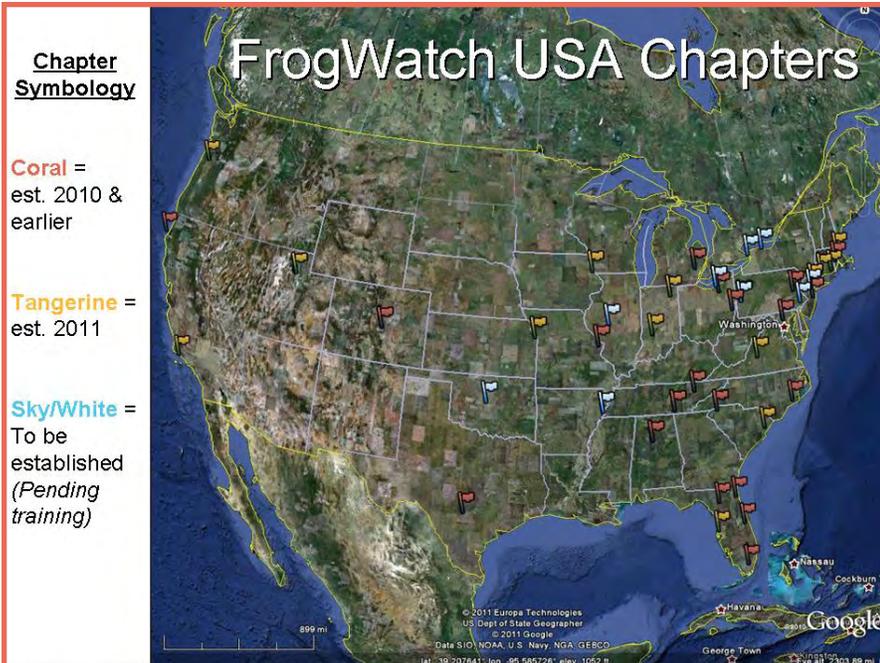
AZA would like to extend their gratitude to you for your leadership in FrogWatch USA, and thank those of you who sent in your end-of-the-year chapter reports! You provided a lot of fantastic feedback and stories, and we wanted to share some of your experiences with all of the chapter coordinators through this report. You will also find an overview of chapter activity (*Stats and Shout-outs*), tips for addressing various challenge topics (*Call and Response*), and examples of commendable activities (*Songs of Praise*).

We encourage you to communicate and share experiences with your peers throughout the year via the chapter coordinator listserv:
frogwatch-coordinators@lists.aza.org.

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2011 Stats & Shout-outs!



EXPANDING THE CHAPTER NETWORK

Sixteen (16) FrogWatch USA chapters were established in 2011, expanding the nationwide network to 36 chapters.

In 2011, all chapter coordinators were trained using the online module:

www.aza.org/fwusa-chapter-coordinator-training/

The following is a snapshot of chapter activity based on the coordinator reports received.

Overall:

Number of chapter coordinator reports received:	20
Number of volunteer trainings held:	44
Total number of training attendees reported:	666

RECORD NUMBERS

Nearly 300 new volunteers became certified in 2011 by receiving a score of 80% or greater on training assessments!

Chapter Standouts:

Max, number of trainings held by one chapter:	6	Wildlife Conservation Society (NY)
Max. number of people trained by one chapter:	143	Roger Williams Park Zoo (RI)
Other chapters with 50+ people trained:	5	Fort Wayne Children's Zoo (IN) Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo (FL) Wildlife Conservation Society (NY) Lynchburg Virginia Nature Zone (VA) North Carolina Aquarium (NC)

Chapters with the greatest # of active volunteers:

Howard County Dept. of Rec. & Parks (MD)
Roger Williams Park Zoo (RI)
Fort Wayne Children's Zoo (IN)
Greenville Zoo (SC)
Oregon Zoo (OR)

MAKING HEADLINES

Nearly every chapter utilized press releases, newspapers, television, and the internet to bring attention to FrogWatch USA and to help recruit volunteers.

Call and Response: Training and Certifying Volunteers

Training and early interaction with volunteers can set the dynamic for future participation. Several chapter coordinators found that a one-day training and certification session was too rigorous for potential volunteers. The following are suggestions for improving the process:

Make the training interactive. Include memory games, invite a keeper, naturalist, or local biologist to speak or guide tours, and incorporate program animals and exhibits to break up the PowerPoints.

- There are activities and other amphibian education resources available online: www.aza.org/amphibian-education-resources/

Offer graduated trainings. Break the training into two sessions and offer certifications at a later date. Splitting the training gives volunteers a chance to review protocols and practice identifications and prevents them from becoming overwhelmed or intimidated.

- Incorporate nearby wetland sites for hands on field training and group surveys.
- Administer the certification assessments on the second day of training or schedule separately. Emphasize the importance of the assessments, but remember, *certification is optional.*



Put frogs and toads first. Many chapter coordinators shared that it was the desire to learn about amphibians that brought in recruits, but that some participants appeared daunted by the paperwork and “process” of becoming a citizen scientist. Try teaching the identification on the first day to get volunteers excited as well as give them the opportunity to practice and build confidence before applying what they learned.

Calls of some species are notoriously confusing and are learned with a little extra practice. This was commonly reported for the gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) and Cope’s gray treefrog (*H. chrysoscelis*) in states where the ranges overlap.

Adapt the species list for your area. Regions with high diversity present a particular challenge for volunteers. Limit the species list to local counties or select the most common species and particular species of interest (e.g., state rare species).

- Species range maps are available from the USGS National Amphibian Atlas (www.pwrc.usgs.gov:8080/mapserver/naa/).
- State species lists, maps, and other resources may also be available from your local department of natural resources or wildlife agency.

Use the PowerPoint templates and other materials as a framework and adapt them to your needs.

You can brand materials to your institution, adjust them to suit your audience, and focus on local species, provided that you maintain the FrogWatch USA logos, teach the standard monitoring protocol, and discuss primary topics (e.g., citizen science, and amphibian natural history and conservation). Include photos of the types of wetlands volunteers may encounter and select for monitoring.

- Compile mnemonic devices and associative words and props to identify species by call and encourage volunteers to come up with their own methods. *AZA can provide sample handouts for Maryland as well as North Carolina (thanks to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission).*
- Several chapters developed in-house field guides and handouts for their volunteers.



Eliminate habitat options that are not applicable and emphasize others. Prairie pot-holes are not found in the Northeastern US but stormwater retention basins can be prominent and often overlooked.

Call and Response: Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

The FrogWatch USA Chapter network has been growing and some chapters report a great deal of success with recruiting volunteers and maintaining a volunteer network. Several others have described substantial interest in frogs and toads and high attendance at trainings, but then participation declines. Below are some tips and practices for bringing interested parties to the program and maintaining them as volunteers once trained.

Advertise. The majority of chapters received overwhelming responses when they advertised upcoming FrogWatch USA trainings.

- Try several outlets. Chapters have had success with advertising via press releases, websites, and social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube).
- Program features in the newspaper and on the radio, and local television often generate excitement, particularly when the role of amphibians in the environment and importance of amphibian conservation are emphasized.
- Register trainings and share news. AZA promotes trainings and features them on the FrogWatch USA website and in newsletters.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Time solicitations for volunteers just before the start of anuran activity.

- Early breeders, such as wood frogs and spring peepers, can be as recognizable as the American robin as ambassadors of spring time.
- Starting too late in the breeding season also limits what volunteers get to hear and experience.

Establish a base. Many first year chapters limited participation to members of their institution and plan to expand to the general public in upcoming seasons. Sometimes aiming to establish a core group of volunteers can set the foundation for a program to grow. Experienced volunteers can also assist and encourage new ones.

Encourage group participation. Some volunteers are more comfortable in a group setting and appreciate using FrogWatch USA as a fun family activity or social event. Arrange group data collection events when possible and invite volunteers to partner up.

Reach out to like-minded communities.

- Post to local amphibian and reptile groups or environmental education listservs.
- Local Audubon Society chapters, Master Naturalist programs, watershed organizations, and other volunteer monitoring or environmental groups are often looking for new opportunities and are already committed environmental stewards.
- Contact local teachers, educators, and academics. Local colleges and universities may have herpetology, field ecology or zoology classes or environmental clubs with students looking for opportunities to gain experience!



A group of FrogWatch USA Chapter volunteers with Utah's Hogle Zoo are ready to monitor.

QUICK TIP:

FrogWatch USA is an accessible program for mature students in late elementary school and older, and can be incorporated into lessons on scientific method, biology, ecology, and environmental science.

Call and Response: Inspiring and Motivating Volunteers

FrogWatch USA chapter coordinators provide the knowledge and tools to help build volunteer trainee confidence as well as maintain their long-term interest so that they return each season.

Adapt concepts to suit the audience.

- Consider volunteer needs and interests - the same material may be best presented in a different way!

Try using trivia and “fun facts”.

- Amphibian biology and adaptations are intriguing and can captivate an audience.

Reach out beyond the core of the program to pique interest.

- Educate and excite people about other nocturnal fauna and interactions within the wetland. Encourage people to look closely at the unique aquatic insects and the terrestrial adults many become - beyond just focusing on those pesky mosquitoes!

Incorporate conservation initiatives and present “the big picture.”

- Remember that establishing the connection between people and their environment and community can motivate them to take action and strengthen their commitment to volunteer.

Build a community - in-person and/or online.

- Engage in social networking, sponsor events for volunteers, and collaborate with partners.
- Research indicates that one of the most important factors influencing learning in citizen science programs with interactions between participants and research staff.

Call and Response: Volunteer Appreciation

As you know all-too-well, it is not easy to find the time to volunteer. Some chapter coordinators recognized their volunteers through the following:

1. Thank you notes or letters of appreciation.
2. End-of-the-year celebrations and barbecues.
3. Group listening events.
4. Naturalist-lead field trips or special herpetofauna searches/surveys.

Oregon Zoo arranged three field trips and an end-of-the-year celebration for its Leadership Corps teen volunteers. Volunteers also participated in other team building and naturalist activities (e.g., orienteering, animal tracking, and journaling).

1. An egg mass survey with natural resource managers at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge gave volunteers the opportunity to join local biologists to learn about Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*) conservation.
2. At the midpoint of FrogWatch USA Season, volunteers met with a doctorate student to learn about Oregon spotted frog predator aversion studies taking place at the zoo.
3. The final field trip was to the base of Mount Hood where volunteers had the opportunity to study frog populations in a different eco-region from their monitoring sites.

“We want volunteers to ACT on the knowledge so they will CHOOSE to become citizen scientists.”

— Bea Stryker,
Lynchburg Virginia Nature
Zone Chapter



© Rachel Gauza

Caddisfly larva (Order: Trichoptera) found in a Maryland seasonal pool. Like amphibians, benthic macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects, worms, mollusks, and crustaceans) are indicators of environmental health.



© Oregon Zoo

Oregon Zoo FrogWatch USA volunteers surveying a transect as part of a frog egg mass survey with researchers at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge.

Songs of Praise: Enhancing the Volunteer Experience through Partnerships and Training Activities

Partnerships

National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium (NMRMA) partnered with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to share training materials and data. Iowa DNR provided a CD copy of “The Frogs and Toads of Iowa” for NMRMA trainings. Chapter data are being used to by Iowa DNR to document species distributions. NMRMA also recruited and trained students from a Vertebrate Field Ecology class from the University of Dubuque.

Roger Williams Park Zoo shares chapter data with the Rhode Island Natural History Survey.

Sequoia Park Zoo solicited volunteers from Humboldt State University.

Utah’s Hogle Zoo FrogWatch USA Chapter worked closely with a local nature center and recruited volunteers from the Master Naturalist Program.

North Carolina Aquarium paired with the North Carolina Amphibian Survey Program (CASP) to host an anuran identification workshop in November.



Information is needed on the range of wood frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) in Iowa. NMRMA FrogWatch USA Chapter is working with Iowa DNR to collect species data in the north-eastern portion of the state.

Training

Saint Louis and Knoxville Zoos independently developed activities where trainees match the frog species to their habitat and mating calls using laminated cards and displays.

- **Saint Louis Zoo** chapter coordinators developed an activity featuring the ten most common species on laminated cards, to scale. The frog cards were distributed throughout the classroom in proximity to the habitat displays that the species were most likely to occupy. Volunteer trainees used pre-made field guides to key out the anurans, and received spectrograms (sound graphs) of species’ calls which they matched to the frog cards as they listened to call recordings. Recordings were played multiple times throughout the training.

Saint Louis Zoo FrogWatch USA coordinators also used an audience response technology, Turning Technologies (www.turningtechnologies.com) with PowerPoint to create an interactive training and frog call assessment.

- **Knoxville Zoo** chapter coordinators incorporated a memory matching game into volunteer trainings. The pictures of 14 anuran species were laid out on the ground with the name of the frog on the back. During the first round of the game, the species name was stated and the call played. The person tried to flip the matching species card using the image of the frog. If the incorrect card was selected, it remained image side up. Those matched correctly were flipped to the name side. Trainees rotated turns. Calls were played until all species were correctly identified, ending the round. During the second round, the trainees used calls alone to select the matching frog image (i.e., no species name was given until the card is flipped over, confirming a correct identification). This activity takes approximately 15 minutes and was reported to work well for a scout group.

Songs of Praise: Grants Received and Program Developments

NMRMA received a \$10,000 grant to develop education trunks and provide amphibian conservation and FrogWatch USA trainings around the state at different educational conferences. The grant funding will also be used to evaluate the Public Participation in Scientific Research (PPSR) experience - investigating why volunteers participate and how they interact with general public, as well as assessing how volunteers learn and improving trainings.

To learn more, contact Jared McGovern: jmcgovern@rivermuseum.com.

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, in partnership with the Frog Listening Network of the Hillsborough River Watershed Alliance, has invested in renovating the Zoo's interactive listening display, which introduces guests to the frogs of West Central Florida. The first round of updates was completed in August 2011 and grant funding has been approved to expand the graphics and displays further in late 2011/early 2012. Graphics within the Listening Network advertise FrogWatch USA and solicit volunteers.

Watch a segment on the show "Wildlife at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo from October 2011: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXVELYgPwsE

Wildlife Conservation Society plans to increase youth/teen participation in citizen science and conservation projects through TogetherGreen (a fellowship program through Audubon Society with support from Toyota).

Read the press release at: www.togethergreen.org/files/volunteerevent/files/Fellows/2011%20Fellowship%20New%20York%20PR.pdf

Announcements and Reminders

In-person chapter coordinator trainings are being planned for January and February 2012. If you know of another institution or organization that would be interested in forming a FrogWatch USA Chapter, please contact frogwatch@aza.org.

Encourage volunteers to review protocols (www.aza.org/current-frogwatch-volunteers/) and practice frog and toad calls during the offseason. Species lists and calls by state can be accessed via the FrogWatch USA homepage and the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP). NAAMP also offers self-quizzing opportunities.

- www.aza.org/states-and-territories/
- www.pwrc.usgs.gov/frogquiz/

Register upcoming volunteer trainings with AZA. AZA promotes trainings and features them in newsletters and on the FrogWatch USA website (www.aza.org/become-a-frogwatch-volunteer).

NEW TOOLS UNDER DEVELOPMENT FOR FROGWATCH USA

National Geographic FieldScope

is an interactive online mapping tool where volunteers can enter, review, visualize, and analyze their data in real time.

- A small pilot study launch of FrogWatch USA FieldScope (FWFS) is planned for breeding season 2012.
- It is anticipated that FWFS will be available program-wide in 2013.
- A mobile site is also in development so that users can enter data in the field from their smart phone.

Look for your invitation to join FrogWatch USA on Flickr & Facebook in January 2012!

- Upload and share photos, send out announcements and advertise events, promote your institution, network with other chapters and volunteers, and engage volunteers.