

DNR: Volunteers needed for frog call surveys

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MADISON, Wis. – Frogs will soon begin chorusing throughout Wisconsin and the Department of Natural Resources is looking for volunteers to lend their ears for help with two different frog and toad surveys.

One survey requires volunteers to drive along set routes three nights during the frog mating season. The other is a phenology survey, aimed at understanding how climate change may be affecting frogs, which people can complete at home or at a nearby wetland, lake or river.

“The information volunteers provide is essential to monitoring and conserving frog and toads in Wisconsin,” said Andrew Badje, a DNR Conservation Biologist who coordinates both surveys for the department’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program.

Since both surveys occur at night after school and when the workday is done, the two surveys are great activities for families and can be completed while social distancing.

“Many families rediscovered how essential nature was to their wellbeing during the pandemic by getting out to enjoy parks, birdwatching and more,” Badje said. “Our frog surveys are yet another great opportunity to connect with nature this year.”

New volunteers can learn the different calls to identify the species, as well as learn more about frog and toad biology and ecology, by watching a series of [short videos on all 12 frog and toad species](#) in Wisconsin.

Traditional Driving Survey

The [Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey \(WFTS\)](#) is a citizen-based monitoring program coordinated by the DNR, in cooperation with the [U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\)](#) .

The DNR began the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey in the early 1980s along pre-set driving routes in response to known and suspected declines of numerous Wisconsin frog species, including the northern leopard frog, American bullfrog, pickerel frog and Blanchard's cricket frog.

Known as North America's longest running citizen science frog calling survey, volunteers have logged 10,108 survey nights and 99,452 site visits since the survey began.

"Over the years, these citizen scientists have helped DNR conservation biologists define the distribution, status, and population trends of all 12 frog and toad species in the state," Badje said.

Volunteers survey one night each in early spring, late spring and summer and make 10 stops per night (five minutes at each site). They identify the species calling and record that information and the relative abundance of each species.

There are roughly two driving routes per county and many Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey routes are still available for 2021. [Click here for the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey statewide map.](#)

Phenology Survey Easily Done From Home Or Nearby Neighborhoods

The DNR has recently added the opportunity for an unlimited number of volunteers to conduct phenology surveys. Such surveys help monitor frog breeding seasons in relation to fluctuating spring weather conditions. Volunteers select one site to monitor throughout the spring and early summer and spend five minutes per night, as often as possible, recording data.

Volunteers have documented the highest levels of American bullfrogs and Blanchard's cricket frogs since the survey began, a sign that proactive conservation measures for these two species are likely paying off. They also have been instrumental in documenting new populations of Blanchard's cricket frogs along the Mississippi River in recent years, and in places they haven't been documented in over 30 years.

Volunteer data has also documented a long-term decline for the northern leopard

frog over the 38-year survey, while showing that spring peepers, boreal chorus frogs and green frogs have been on more stable paths since the survey began.