

Nicola Naturalist Society Amphibian Monitoring Project - 2011

Frogs are calling (you)! Dr. Kristiina Ovaska Biolinx Environmental Research Ltd.

Do you enjoy paddling in ponds, sloshing in sloughs, wandering along wetlands, or just spending time watching wild creatures going about their lives? If your answer is “yes” to any of the above, please come and join us for an information session on how you can help monitor amphibians in our area.

Ever since a child, I have been fascinated by the wet and wonderful world of frogs and salamanders, and over the past several decades as a professional biologist I have been able to continue my interest in all things slimy, slithery, and/or jumping, which of course include frogs. Unfortunately, many amphibian populations throughout the world have experienced dramatic declines and even extinctions for reasons that are not fully understood, while others still remain healthy. It is important to monitor these “canaries in the coal mine”, so that future generations can watch a tadpole turn into a frog, and continue enjoying the special places that amphibians, along with a myriad of other wetland animals and plants, call home.

You may have heard that the Nicola Naturalist Society is starting an amphibian monitoring project this spring. If you would like to participate in the surveys or have wetlands or ponds on your property included in the survey, we would like to hear from you. I will hold a mini-workshop for volunteers interested in this project - watch for an announcement of time and place. Come and find out whether this is something you might be interested in pursuing.

What are the goals of the project?

We want to find out:

- Distributions of different amphibian species within the landscape;
- Where important breeding areas are located; and
- Health of amphibian populations and their habitats over time.

Who can participate?

We welcome anybody with a keen interest in wildlife and wetlands. You will receive training in identification of different life stages of frogs and salamanders, on survey methods, and on how to document what you see.

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What does monitoring amphibians involve?

Several different survey methods are available. You will have an opportunity to participate in one or more of the following:

- *Call surveys* are carried out after dark along selected routes to locate breeding sites of chorusing frogs. This method works well for species with loud calls such as Spadefoots and Pacific Treefrogs.
- *Pond surveys* consist of walking along the shoreline and/or paddling around a water body and visually searching for adult amphibians and/or their egg masses. These surveys are carried out during the day.
- *Larval surveys* include using dip nets to find out whether tadpoles or salamander larvae are present in a water body, which indicates an amphibian breeding site. Larvae can also be trapped using minnow traps (and released after identification).

What level of effort is required?

The level of effort and type of involvement is flexible and up to you. Here are some examples of how you can participate:

- Join in group activities, when we all go out as a group to carry out a survey
- Independently monitor a particular pond or wetland or a group of wetlands close to your home
- Take on a frog call route with a friend near where you live
- Accompany herpetologists on different types of surveys
- Opportunistically check out water bodies when you go hiking or boating
- Share your local knowledge of wetlands and water bodies in the area
- Report opportunistic observations of amphibians, including sites of mass migrations of newly transformed toadlets across roads or elsewhere. It all counts!

Will there be opportunities for observing other wildlife and plants?

Certainly! We encourage people to take the time to observe and document birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and plants they see while visiting wetlands.

How do I get started?

Please attend our upcoming mini-workshop. After an approximately 1 h presentation and discussion, we plan to go out and try to locate Columbia Spotted Frogs, which breed very early in the spring – weather permitting. If you can't make it this time but are interested, there will be further opportunities to get involved.

For more information or to join us as a volunteer, please contact:
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