Alberta Conservation Association

2024/25 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program

Wildlife Program Manager: Doug Manzer

Project Leader: Kris Kendell

Primary ACA Staff on Project: Amanda Rezansoff

Partnerships

Government of Alberta

Key Findings

- In 2024/25, 34 Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program (AVAMP) participants contributed a total of 39 observations for five amphibian and three reptile species, including the identification of three snake hibernacula (dens). These submissions encompassed 50% of the native amphibian species and 33% of the native reptile species within the province.
- We developed a framework for an iNaturalist AVAMP project page, presenting information about the project's goals, objectives, and outlining the expected contributions from participants.
- We conducted three public presentations aimed at cultivating knowledge and fostering engagement in the field of amphibians and reptiles. These sessions encompassed expert perspectives, local initiatives, educational settings, and community participation in species identification, ecology, and common conservation interests shared among students and nature enthusiasts.

Details

Volunteers play an important role in advancing wildlife conservation by actively participating in citizen science projects focused on biodiversity. One of Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) largest wildlife volunteer-based projects is AVAMP. Through volunteering, AVAMP

participants have the chance to enhance their knowledge of wildlife and conservation issues, utilize their skills and experiences for contributing to conservation efforts, and establish connections with wildlife professionals.

To streamline the way AVAMP participants make and report their observations, we are developing a partnership with iNaturalist. iNaturalist is an online reporting system that consists of a social network of naturalists, citizen scientists, and biologists, and is accessible from any location with internet access. Observations from AVAMP participants become part of the larger iNaturalist database but are accessible to ACA for aggregation and analysis.

Citizen science is a pivotal force in understanding and protecting vulnerable species such as amphibians, whose unique biology and habitat dependencies make them particularly sensitive to environmental threats. To address this vulnerability, regulatory frameworks and policies have been established to safeguard amphibians, often incorporating minimum specified distances between certain activities or structures and sensitive areas, such as habitats crucial for amphibians. In this context, citizen science programs play a vital role by providing essential information on amphibian species occurrences, a crucial initial step in developing setback guidelines that by extension yield positive effects for other wildlife.

As the chair of the Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Specialist Group and member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission Amphibian Specialist Group, Canada, we actively foster knowledge exchange and collaboration among specialists, researchers, and practitioners. These roles reflect our dedicated commitment to advancing conservation efforts within the realm of amphibians and reptiles.

In 2024/25, AVAMP received contributions from 34 participants who submitted a total of 39 observations for five amphibian and three reptile species, including the documentation of three snake hibernacula (dens). These valuable observations encompassed 50% of the native amphibian species and 33% of the native reptile species within the province. All data was submitted to the Fisheries and Wildlife Management Information System, a centralized provincial database accessible to government staff, industry professionals, and the public for storing and retrieving fisheries and wildlife information. AVAMP data is an important contribution to this shared knowledge base.

Photos

Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program

Photo 1. The AVAMP logo. Photo: ACA

Photo 2. The painted turtle is occasionally observed and reported to the program. Interestingly, many sightings come from well outside its known range, which is mostly limited to the Milk River basin in southern Alberta. By reporting turtle sightings, citizen scientists help biologists understand where the species has been introduced. Photo: Kris Kendell