
CROAKS AND TRILLS

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New Volunteer Coordinator

A new volunteer coordinator has taken over the Alberta Amphibian Monitoring Program in April 2002. Kris Kendell, a biologist with Alberta Conservation Association will be taking on coordination of the volunteers!! Kris has been involved in a number of amphibian related projects over the years including the Northern Leopard Frog Reintroduction Project (see page 2 for more information). Lisa Takats is taking a new position with Bird Studies Canada, as the Prairie Program Coordinator.

The mailing address will remain the same, however, the new phone number is (780) 422-4764 and the new E-mail address is kris.kendell@gov.ab.ca.

Volunteer Numbers Continue to Rise

Lisa Takats

There were 274 volunteer participants that contributed 522 observations of amphibians in 2001. All 10 species of amphibians were recorded (Table 1). Boreal chorus frogs and wood frogs were the most common species encountered. Many volunteers observed that the wetlands were drying up. The breeding season was later in 2001 compared to 2000, and boreal chorus frogs and wood frogs were heard calling through late July.

It was an extremely dry year in 2001. Some of the following news releases talk about the conditions in Alberta:

“Extremely dry conditions prevail across virtually the entire province. Alberta had little or no snow cover this past winter and precipitation this spring has been very poor.” (National Crop Conditions Report - http://www.agr.gc.ca/policy/crop/cr2001/1crop_e.html)

“Extreme dry conditions and lack of significant precipitation has prompted the province to declare a drought disaster and respond to the immediate need of livestock producers. The province will provide assistance of \$4.00 per acres through the Native Forage Component of the Farm Income Assistance Program 2001”. (<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/fiap/>)

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Table 1. Volunteer amphibian records for the 2001 season, including number of observation, number of individuals, earliest and latest records.

| Species | Number of Visits | Number of Individuals | Earliest Record | Latest Record |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Tiger Salamander | 22 | 26 | April 29 | October 11 |
| Long-toed Salamander | 15 | 210 | May 6 | October 4 |
| Plains Spadefoot | 10 | 16 | June 15 | July 11 |
| Great Plains Toad | 5 | 8 | June | July 21 |
| Canadian Toad | 17 | 25 | May 5 | August 3 |
| Western (Boreal) Toad | 72 | 590 | May 23 | September 27 |
| Boreal Chorus Frog | 401 | 5905 | April 22 | August 16 |
| Wood Frog | 314 | 3620 | April 19 | September 19 |
| Spotted Frog | 10 | 17 | May 6 | October 4 |
| Northern Leopard Frog | 16 | 215 | July 14 | September 19 |

Northern Leopard Frog Reintroduction Project

Kris Kendell

The northern leopard frog was previously a common and widespread amphibian throughout much of southern and central Alberta. During the late 1970s the leopard frog exhibited a dramatic decline in both distribution and population numbers. Today the leopard frog is found primarily in the southeast portion of the province. As a result, it is listed as Threatened under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*, meaning that it is at risk of becoming endangered if limiting factors are not reversed. Biocides such as pesticides and herbicides, wetland drainage, habitat degradation, climate change and disease are just a few factors that threaten the leopard frog, and other amphibians, during their aquatic life cycle and in their adult phase.



In efforts to bolster leopard frog numbers in Alberta and re-establish populations in historic habitats, Alberta Fish and Wildlife and the Alberta Conservation Association initiated a reintroduction project in 1999. The project involved the captive rearing of leopard frogs under controlled conditions, from egg stage of development to metamorphosed frog, at the Raven Brood Trout Station, near Caroline, Alberta. Over the course of three years several thousand young leopard frogs have been released into the wild at two release sites located near Caroline and Rocky Mountain House, Alberta.

The project has shown initial signs of success at the first of the two carefully selected release sites. Last summer, leopard frogs were observed in the upper headwaters of the Red Deer River near Caroline. These were the first leopard frogs seen in this area in nearly a half century!

For more information about the northern leopard frog reintroduction project visit:

http://www.ab-conservation.com/projects/project_details.asp?project=24 or

Contact Kris Kendell at (780) 422-4764

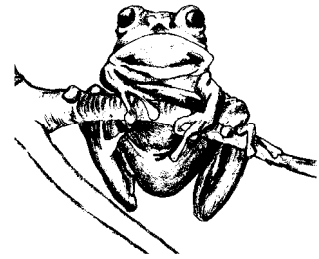
A GREAT BIG THANKS!!!!!!

To all these individuals and organizations for contributing amphibian data.

Tricia Abbott
Norine Ambrose
Reg Arbuckle
Theresa Augustyn
Andrea Barnes
Lloyd and Yolanda Bennett
Dawn Birn
Rick Bonar
Carey Booth
Des Bovell
Mark Bradley
Morag Brenneis
William Brese
Dorothy Cage
Wendy Carpenter
John Carrier
Valerie Coenen
Marilyn Collard
Ray Cromie
Anna Marie Dabbagh
Leah den Haan
Aaron Domes
D'Arcy Donald
Brian Eaton
Sara Eaves
Edmonton Natural History Club
field trip (12 people)
Elmwood Elementary School (27 students)
Lance Engley
Chris Fisher
Gregg Fletcher
Tyler Flockhart
Marco Fontana
George Foresst
Ralph "Ben" Foster
Jen Gammon

Murielle Gingras
Steve Glendinning
Chris Godwin-Sheppard
John Golden
Don Gordon
Rich Grander
Sarah Green
Bill Heinsen
Rebecca Hoover
Anne Hubbs
Jason Huckley
Mai-Linh Huynh
Glen Hvenegaard
Rhonda Inglis
Janice James
Frank Jeffreys
Davis Johnson
Sandra Jones
Della Keeler
Jessie Kinley
John Kolten
Claudette Landry
Sheldon Kowalchuk
Harold Kroden
Michelle Kromplak
MacIntyre family
Murray MacKay
Robert McDonald
Alf and Carole Morrill
Muriel Mueller
Nathan Mulligan
Lucy and Alex Nay
Carole and Paul Newton
Dee Patriquin
Kieth Patton
Kim Pearson

Rhonda Peaters
Jim Pender
Hardy Pletz
Jeff Pluth
Andrea Pollock
Troy Pretzlaw
Chuck Priestley
Gill Priestley
John Pullman
Richard Quinlan
Kristina Richardson
Dean Rogers
Selwyn Rose
Michael Rousté
Ken Sanderson
Adele Scammel
Greg Shubert
Georgina Shumaker
Bryn Spence
Carol Spring
Lisa Takats
Daryl Watters
Rebecca Wadlin



Provincial Parks

Bow Valley
Carsen-Pegasus
Cypress Hills
Dinosaur
Lesser Slave Lake
Miquelon Lake
Moonshine Lake
Saskatoon Island
Taber
W. A. Switzer

Natural History Groups

Beaverhill Bird Observatory
Edmonton Natural History Club
Friends of Saskatoon Island Provincial Park
Operation Grasslands Community
Friends of Kimiwan Lake
Inglewood Bird Sanctuary - Calgary

Consulting Companies

AMEC Earth and Environmental Ltd.
AXYS Environmental Consulting Ltd.
Golder and Associated
Westworth and Associates

Fish and Wildlife Offices

Calgary
Edmonton
Lac La Biche
Medicine Hat
Peace River
Slave Lake

Other

Canadian Wildlife Service - Edmonton
City of Lethbridge
Dow Chemical Canada, Inc.
Weldwood of Canada, Ltd.
Ducks Unlimited

2001 Volunteer Notes

*Reg Arbuckle discovered a Western Toad under the dock at Fowell Lake during the first week in September (photo on right).



*Aaron Domes was hiking through Yamnuska Natural Area one morning when he spotted a Columbia spotted frog. It was sitting along the edge of a narrow channel, branching off of a large beaver pond.

*Elmwood Elementary grade five class was out and about again for their sixth year to the Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary. The water level at the site was much lower this year, but they managed to hear two boreal chorus frogs and observe one wood frog.



*On May 14, 2001 Richard Quinlan and his son were canoeing on Lees Lake when they spotted a western painted turtle. The turtle was basking in the sun just one meter away from where a Canada Goose was sitting on its nest!

*On September long weekend Carole Spring found a Canadian toad at her parents cabin near Sundre. Marilyn Collard from Golder and Associates found Canadian toads on some of their surveys in the Fort McMurray area (photo left).



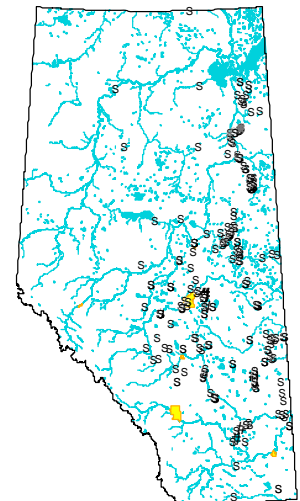
*Marco Fontana herd a full chorus of boreal chorus frogs as well as a few wood frogs from a pond located at the bottom of a coulee in southeastern Alberta. The boreal chorus frogs called all day and well into the night, but the wood frogs only called for about a half an hour. Marco made an incredible 20 observations of amphibians covering four species: boreal chorus frog, wood frog, northern leopard frog, and western toad.

*Georgina Shumaker collected some long-toed salamanders in the Hines Creek area on May 24, 2001 (photo left).

*Chantal Pattenden surveyed on 58 occasions throughout the summer of 2001 at the same site, and she recorded wood frogs and boreal chorus frogs. Mark Bradley from Wood Buffalo National Park also found Canadian toads during surveys conducted in the park.

Canadian Toad Concerns

An updated map of Canadian toad distribution in Alberta was created this year (map on right). The Alberta Endangered Species Conservation Committee recommended a designation of Data Deficient for the Canadian toad and the Great Plains toad indicating that there is not enough information to determine populations trends and statuses.



Currently 7 of Alberta's 10 amphibians are At Risk, May Be At Risk, or are Sensitive. The Canadian toad, Great Plains toad, plains spadefoot, Columbia spotted frog, long-toed salamander, and western (boreal) toad are all species with management concerns and more information is required on population trends. If you would like more information on these species, check out the detailed status reports at: <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/status/reports/rep/index.html>.

Researching Amphibian Numbers in Alberta (RANA) 2001

Six RANA sites were monitored in 2001. Sites at Beaverhill and Lakeland were not surveyed this year, although educational programs continued. In total, 1393 amphibians were captured at the main RANA ponds. Seven species of amphibians were captured in pitfall traps: tiger salamander, long-toed salamander, western (boreal) toad, boreal chorus frog, wood frog, Columbia spotted frog, and northern leopard frog.

In addition to the main RANA ponds, there were 180 other ponds surveyed for amphibians (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of surrounding wetland sites that were surveyed for amphibians 1997-2001.

| Location | Number of Surrounding Wetland Sites | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
| Beaverhill Lake | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Hinton | - | - | - | 26 | 46 |
| Cypress Hills | - | 29 | 30 | 39 | 61 |
| Kananaskis | - | 14 | 35 | 46 | 43 |
| Lakeland | - | - | 0 | - | - |
| Lesser Slave Lake | 3 | 1 | 12 | 10 | 16 |
| Meanook | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Saskatoon Island | - | - | 2 | 8 | 11 |
| TOTAL | 5 | 47 | 81 | 131 | 180 |

RANA site staff promoted amphibians and wetlands through plays, songs, field trips, slide presentations. A total of 7 491 people were contacted in 2001 (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of people that were informed about RANA/amphibian monitoring/wetlands 1997-2001.

| Location | Number of People | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
| Beaverhill Lake | 50 | 125 | 350 | 375 | 384 |
| Cypress Hills | - | 150 | 352 | 468 | 35 |
| Hinton | - | - | - | 360 | 293 |
| Kananaskis | - | 359 | 353 | 408 | 4597 |
| Lakeland | - | -- | 31 | - | 40 |
| Lesser Slave Lake | 326 | 611 | 884 | 1 111 | 313 |
| Meanook | 10 | 20 | 104 | 29 | 30 |
| Saskatoon Island | - | -- | 252 | 1 200 | 1799 |
| TOTAL | 386 | 1 265 | 2 326 | 3 951 | 7491 |

Northeast Boreal Amphibian Monitoring, Canadian Shield and Lakeland Results

Jennifer Gammon

A Provincial Parks inventory study of three parks located south of Lake Athabasca, in the Canadian Shield Natural Region of Alberta was conducted this summer. These parks include Richardson River Dunes, Maybelle River (Athabasca Dunes Ecological Reserve) and Marguerite Crag & Tail Wildland Parks. The core study area was mainly the Northeast Boreal Region of Alberta extending from Highway 55 (south of Lac La Biche) north to Lake Athabasca. A substantial number of amphibians were observed and this data will hopefully help to update provincial records.

Data was recorded based on sightings and vocalizations during walking surveys. Some amphibian data was also gathered from the small mammal traplines. Amphibians were often caught in the small mammal pitfall traps that were located along lakeshores or wetlands. I recorded their locations with GPS coordinates.

Twenty-one sites were surveyed with 42 records being generated. Three species were recorded during the surveys: wood frog, boreal chorus frog, and Canadian toad. Results are available in a report which can be obtained from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Lac La Biche.

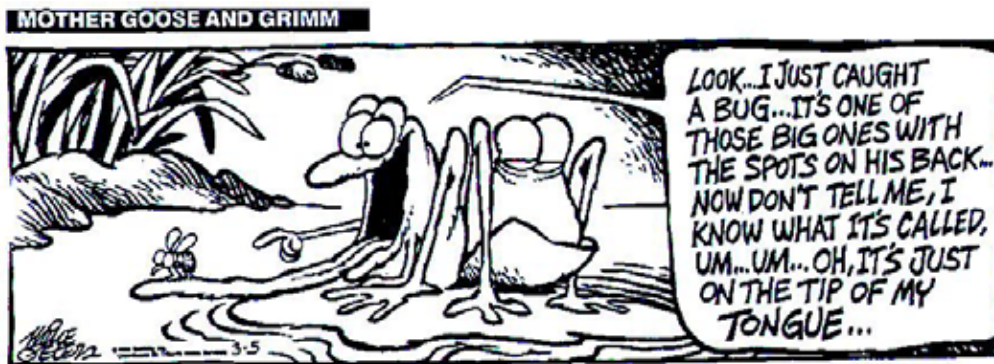
MARSH MONITORING PROGRAM

Lisa Takats, Bird Studies Canada

Bird Studies Canada is looking to initiate a Marsh Monitoring Program in Alberta. This program has more intensive monitoring of marsh birds and amphibians using call surveys. The program will be tested using methods specific to the marsh wildlife in Alberta, but will be standardized so that it can be comparable across Canada. This program will run alongside the existing Alberta Amphibian Monitoring Program. Thanks to the Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and the Canadian Wildlife Service for supporting this initiative through in-kind support.



FROG CARTOON



If you would like to:

- ← volunteer for the Alberta Amphibian Monitoring Program,
- ↑ submit an article, on amphibians, reptiles, or wetlands,

Please send the information to: Kris Kendell, Editor, Croaks and Trills, Alberta Amphibian Monitoring Program, 7th floor, 6909-116 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6H 4P2. FAX: (780) 422-9685, E-mail: kris.kendell@gov.ab.ca WEBSITE: <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/amphib/index.html>