

E.L. Rose Conservancy
Cornell Dept. of Natural Resources



Frog Call Survey Protocol

You can start frogwatching 30 minutes after sunset or later. When you arrive at your first stop, record the weather information. Stay quiet for a couple of minutes before starting to listen for frogs and toads. Remain as quiet as possible during this time so you don't disturb the frogs and toads – they may stop singing if you make too much noise.

When you are ready, cup your hands around your ears and listen for precisely 3 minutes.

After 3 minutes, record:

The time you started listening.

The time you stopped.

The different species that you heard.

The calling intensity for each species separately, use the calling index.

You can start over if you are disturbed – for example, an airplane flies overhead or a car drives past you. Just remember to change the time you started on your data sheet.

If you aren't sure about what you are hearing, bring a tape recorder and record the sounds. When you get home, use purchased CDs or the USGS Frog Quiz web site to help identify the sounds.

Send your data sheets to Kristi Sullivan (109 Fernow Hall, Ithaca, NY, 14853) by US mail, by fax (607-255-2815), or by email (kls20@cornell.edu). You don't have to report your data after every visit, but you should send your data in a timely matter so that your observations can be analyzed.

Time of Year

The breeding season of a given species depends upon temperature, rainfall, length of the day, and biological factors for a specific locality. At your sites, some species, such as wood frogs, can be heard vocalizing early in the year, while the breeding season for others, such as bullfrogs, starts later in the year. Please consult a field guide for specific information about the breeding seasons of your local frog and toad species.

Time of Day

Most frogs and toads start to call about a half-hour after sunset. Some frogs and toads call during the day if it is the weather is dark and rainy. Because most species call at night please wait until at least a half-hour after sunset to begin listening.

How Often

You can frogwatch as often as your interest and schedule allows. We suggest that you visit your site once or twice per week during the breeding season, which differs for each species (late March – July). If that commitment is too rigorous for you, don't worry, because even a few visits per year will provide us with useful information.

Suitable Weather Conditions

There are times when the weather conditions are too severe for you to collect good data, because animals would not be calling or would be difficult to hear. Before you frogwatch, make sure that:

1. The air temperature is warmer than 35°F or 2°C.
2. It isn't raining too hard – heavy rain will interfere with your ability to hear the frogs calling.
3. The wind is not stronger than 3 according to the Beaufort Wind Scale, or when there is a gentle breeze, such as leaves, twigs in constant motion; small flags extend.

Equipment

- Hard copy of this [protocol](#)
- Data sheet for each visit
- Pencil or indelible ink pen
- One flashlight per person
- Extra flashlight (just in case)
- Thermometer
- Watch
- Tape recorder - in case you want to compare the sounds at your site with the audio recordings you have obtained

Have Fun!