

# Amphibian and Reptile Frequently Asked Questions



## #2 - Frogs

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## 2. Frogs

### **2.1 Question 1: Why do I see so many frogs crossing the road during rainy spring evenings?**

Some species of frogs breed early in the spring. This may involve individuals travelling from their over-wintering locations beneath logs and leaf litter within a woodland to the nearest wetland, where they will mate. This migration often coincides with the earliest warm, spring rains. Because a number of species, such as the wood frog, the spring peeper and the chorus frog breed in a small window of time, they are known to migrate in large numbers to breeding ponds. If there happens to be a road bisecting the habitat they over-wintered in from their breeding pond, they will attempt to cross the road. Many do not survive.

### **2.2 Question 2: How can I help them cross the road?**

*You should only attempt this if you can do so safely.* Make sure that you pull your car well off of the road and that you are not putting yourself at risk by walking along a busy road, highway or interstate. Also if it is dark outside, only attempt this if conditions are safe AND you are wearing high visibility, reflective clothing. Once you have taken the necessary safety precautions, you can attempt to help these animals across the road in one of two ways: (1) picking them up by hand, walking them across the road and releasing them on the other side (put them on the side of the road that they were trying to get to), (2) use a bucket or container with a ¼ inch of water at the bottom to transport them across the road. If there are many frogs trying to cross the road at once, you can more efficiently move them by placing many individuals in the bucket at a time (to reduce the number of times you have to cross the road to release them).

**2.3 Question 3: I have a frog that I collected from a nearby pond that I have been keeping as a pet for my child. We don't want it anymore. What should I do with it?**

Unless you have only had the frog in captivity for a short period of time, we do not recommend returning them to the wild, as it is possible it contracted a disease or illness in captivity that could be spread to wild populations and have devastating results. If you have had the frog for only a short period of time, return the animal to the same site it was collected from.

The northern cricket frog is an endangered species in Wisconsin and it is illegal to possess them for any reason, including as a pet, without an Endangered and Threatened Species Permit.

If the frog is one of the species that is not protected in Wisconsin (e.g., American toad, northern leopard frog) and you do not feel you can release the animal, you have a few options. You can contact local schools or nature centers and see if any would like to take this animal as an educational pet. You can contact local zoos to see if they would be interested, but it is unlikely they will be. Most zoos have carefully selected the animals they display for specific purposes. These animals have been quarantined and habituated to captivity. Taking a stray pet may not fit into their current display plans. Furthermore, most do not want to set a precedent of taking surrendered animals, to avoid the risk of becoming overwhelmed by pets that are no longer wanted. For more information on Wisconsin DNR amphibian and reptile regulations please visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/herps/pdfs/WIHerpsRegs.pdf>.

**2.4 Question 4: Can I collect tadpoles and/or frog eggs and raise them?**

Tadpoles can be difficult to feed and raise in captivity through metamorphosis. They only thrive under specific conditions (light, heat, cleanliness) and when fed the right food. Therefore, we don't recommend keeping tadpoles as pets through metamorphosis, unless you are experienced in such animal care.

Based on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Herptile Regulations, an individual may collect and possess up to one full clutch of amphibians eggs and their hatched larvae up until metamorphosis. Only five adult-form individuals may be possessed. However, individuals are not permitted to collect eggs of the state-endangered cricket frog. For more information on Wisconsin DNR amphibian and reptile regulations please visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/herps/pdfs/WIHerpsRegs.pdf>.

**2.5 Question 5: Why do frogs croak or call?**

The frogs that you hear calling are males and they do this to attract females during the mating season. Each species has a unique call and females only respond to calls from males of their own species. It is possible to determine what species are present in a given water body by listening to the frogs calling during the breeding season.

**2.6 Question 6: I want to learn the calls of Wisconsin's frogs, where can I get recordings of them?**

There are several sources of Wisconsin frog calls:

The Wisconsin Audubon Society has recordings of Wisconsin's frog calls on CD or cassette tape (created by Anderson and Jansen) that can be obtained through their website: <http://wisconsinaudubon.org/audubon/html/frogtape.htm>.

Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey website (maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources): <http://wiatri.net/inventory/FrogToadSurvey/index.cfm>.

The Frogs and Toads of North America: A comprehensive guide to their identification, behavior and calls (Lang Elliot, Carl Gerhardt and Carlos Davidson). This is a comprehensive CD with excellent recordings. Although it is very thorough, it includes the calls of many species not native to Wisconsin.

The Amphibians and Reptiles of Wisconsin (Stan Tekiela). A beginner's guide to identification of native Wisconsin herpetile species, that includes a CD of frog calls.

**2.7 Question 7: What is the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey?**

This is a citizen-based monitoring program that is coordinated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (in cooperation with the United States Geological Survey and the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program). The monitoring surveys are conducted by volunteers, who go out at night at specific times and locations to listen for calling male frogs on predetermined, easily-accessible routes (such as along a roadside). Initiated state-wide in 1984, it is one of the longest running amphibian monitoring projects in North America. The information obtained can be used to determine the status, distribution and long-term population trends of Wisconsin's native frog species. The Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey website is located at: <http://wiatri.net/inventory/FrogToadSurvey/index.cfm>.

**2.8 Question 8: How do I volunteer for the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey?**

If you are interested, you must first check for available survey routes in your area at the following website: <http://wiatri.net/inventory/FrogToadSurvey/googlemaps/RouteFinder.cfm>. If an appropriate route is available, email the survey coordinators at [WFTS@wisconsin.gov](mailto:WFTS@wisconsin.gov) and indicate that you are interested. To learn more about the specifics of survey methods, check the following web address: <http://wiatri.net/inventory/FrogToadSurvey/Volunteer/manual.cfm>.

**2.9 Question 9: How can I keep frogs from getting into my backyard pond?**

This can be difficult to do in a way that is humane, cost-effective and/or not troublesome to you. Installing solid fences (i.e., concrete walled fences, and not picket fence, chain link fence, or other fencing with gaps/holes) around your property will keep out some species (such as toads and leopard frogs). However, this will not deter species that can climb, such as treefrogs and/or spring peepers. If you have suitable habitat for frogs, they typically will find a way in.

**2.10 Question 10: How can I identify a frog I found?**

You can view pictures and descriptions of them on the Wisconsin DNR's website: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/biodiversity/index.asp?mode=detail&Grp=21>.

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