

Amphibian Crossing Survey



The Endangered and Nongame Species Program and the NJ Audubon Society are entering their 4th year as partners on the *Amphibian Crossing Survey Project*. We need volunteers to help us monitor sites in Warren and Morris County and to identify additional crossings throughout the northern region of the state in March 2007. *(Due to limited resources, we are currently focusing our efforts on northern New Jersey.)*

What is an amphibian crossing?

Amphibians spend their winters underground in upland areas. Each spring amphibians migrate to nearby wetlands and vernal pools to breed, returning to their own aquatic birthing area to meet a mate of their own. They travel directly to these breeding sites, often through our yards and across our roads. Unfortunately, as NJ's landscape changes and more residential communities and commercial development spread across the state, these critical migration corridors are being increasingly splintered by roads that make safe passage to the breeding areas difficult and in some areas, impossible. Some populations of amphibians have already been eliminated due to road mortality and increased scavenger presence along migration routes that cross roads.

Why are amphibians important?

Amphibians are regarded by many scientists as indicators of a region's health and as the first indicators to harmful environmental changes such as pollutants and higher aquatic temperatures. Basically, if we see problems in the amphibian community, it's just a matter of time before larger organisms (such as birds, mammals, and humans) will be affected as well.

Amphibian populations are declining worldwide as a result of a number of factors, including water pollution, increased pesticide use, and habitat loss, which is the most significant factor for all of NJ's species of conservation concern. Amphibians depend on both terrestrial and aquatic habitats throughout their life cycles. The loss of forests and wetland habitats, including clearing forests, filling in vernal pools, and development that leads to changes in the water table that dry out critical wetlands, only add to these critters' plight. Finally, fragmentation of habitat can also play a critical role in the demise of an amphibian population as they attempt to travel from one area to another. Amphibians become easy prey targets in open habitats (lawns, driveways, roads) and at barriers such as curbs and fences that are often impossible to cross.

While many amphibians are killed by vehicles during the spring migration, it is often an undetected massacre as scavengers clean our roads before our early morning commute.



We need you!

We are in search of volunteers willing to participate in the survey. These surveys are conducted **at night** during March (nights to be determined, weather dependent). We need two types of volunteers.

Volunteer A: Attends training session in late-February, attends 1 – 2 night crossings in March (approximately 4 hours/ night) to monitor and rescue individuals crossing roads in Warren and/or Morris County

Volunteer B: Attends training session in late-February, will select areas to conduct drive-around searches during all misty to rainy nights in March. **YOU MUST WORK IN TEAMS** (min. of 2 people) to be a "Volunteer B."

If you are interested in participating in the Amphibian Crossing Survey in 2007, contact Brad Yucius at the Endangered and Nongame Species Program at brad.yucius@yahoo.com.