

Introduction:

Environmentalists around the world have recently become concerned over declines in the populations of many amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts). In response to a call for amphibian surveys, representatives of the Natural History Society, the Environmental Coalition of P.E.I., the P.E.I. Fish and Wildlife Division, the P.E.I. National Park, and Holland College Summerside organized the Island's Amphibian Monitoring Committee during the winter of 1992-93. Upon reviewing available information, it was quickly apparent that we did not have sufficient data to determine what was happening with either our amphibian or reptile populations. Thus, in the spring of 1993, the Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island Ltd. with assistance from the Souris and Area Wildlife Federation, the Friends of MacPhail, Provincial Parks staff at Mill River and the other members of the Amphibian Monitoring Committee organized training sessions for volunteer monitors at Souris, Orwell, and Mill River. It is hoped that the volunteers who are or become involved in this project will be able to provide the necessary information on the distribution and abundance of our frogs, toads, salamanders, and snakes. As those participating in these surveys must be familiar with the sound and/or sight identification of our native amphibians and reptiles, the Society provided copies of an audio-cassette on frog and toad calls and a slide show on all known amphibians and reptiles as well as potential other species that might have been missed in previous surveys. This special issue of the Island Naturalist is another facet of this training program and will allow all Society members to contribute their sightings.

The objective in the initial year of the project is develop an occurrence map for the various species of frogs and toads and to start the collection of sighting reports on salamanders and snakes.

Techniques:

The volunteers who participate in the project can be involved either in monitoring ponds within hearing distance of their home, in monitoring three to five ponds along an assigned road route near their home, or in recording observations or calls while fishing or walking near wetland habitats. The participants in the first two types of sound surveys will have to devote part of **three evenings of their time, one during the first two weeks in May, one in the second two weeks in May, and the third in mid-June.** Casual one time observations from trout or salmon fishers and naturalists will also be recorded so that as complete a distribution map as possible can be constructed for these species on the Island (refer to recording form on page 15).

Casual sighting reports are also encouraged for frogs, toads, salamanders, and snakes so that better information can be obtained on their distribution on the Island, the types of vegetation in which they occur at various times of the year, and areas where they congregate to overwinter or breed. Warm, wet rainy nights in spring are excellent for checking known amphibian road crossing points near marshes and sunny, cool fall days are ideal for checking rock and wood piles for snakes. Remember to wear high visibility clothing if you are walking along or standing near a road, especially on a wet night. For sighting reports, record the actual number seen and as much information on the habitat as possible.

The information collected by the volunteer monitors will be plotted using map coordinates and computers. The participants will be supplied a photocopy of the appropriate map on which they can mark the sample site and this will be converted into a set of coordinates for entry into a geographic information system data base to generate occurrence maps.