

FIRST ANNUAL SPRING AMPHIBIAN HUNT (by Barb MacDonald, Charlottetown)

Sometime in early spring, the frogs and salamanders begin to emerge from hibernation and head for the nearest freshwater pond in order to mate. While some just surface from the bottom of ponds, others travel over land to return to the water. At this time of year one can witness the mass spring migration of amphibians by just driving along a quiet highway on a rainy night.

As the Spring Peepers had been calling for several days and it had been raining all day, the time seemed right to gather for the first annual spring amphibian hunt. Five brave souls, Geoff Hogan, Gerald MacDonald, John Wright, Arlene MacGuigan, and myself, set out at about 8:30 p.m. on the cold, wet night of April 27.

Our first stop was a pond in the Bunbury area. The sound of Spring Peepers was nearly deafening, but patient searching around the marshy edges of the pond did not reveal a single frog. As peepers are so small and well camouflaged, it is nearly impossible to see them amongst the reeds and rushes.

As we travelled along the road again towards Johnston's River, we kept our eyes peeled for any sign of movement across the highway. We were about ready to give up when Geoff spotted something - a toad, just sitting there in the middle of the road. Encouraged by our first success, we continued on until we turned off onto a very muddy road (where we narrowly escaped getting stuck!). We decided to walk along the road to see what could be found.

Spring Peepers, Wood Frogs and the occasional toad serenaded us as we searched the ground with flashlights. Suddenly someone spotted something moving across the muddy furrows - a salamander! As we walked on we saw several of them, of two different kinds, all moving across the road towards a watery place somewhere in the darkness. All in all, along a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile stretch of road we counted 13 Spotted and 15 Blue-spotted Salamanders in just 45 minutes. As if they were not enough, we also found in the same area a Leopard Frog, a Wood Frog, another toad, and amazingly enough, 2 Spring Peepers.

Further surprises were in store for us as we made our way home. Geoff Hogan's keen eyes spotted a strange object on the side of the road somewhere near Mount Herbert. When we stopped to investigate, it turned out to be not a frog, not a toad, not a salamander, but . . . a chicken! It must have fallen off the back of a truck and, although it seemed a bit stunned, it was not hurt. The chicken was christened "Herbert" and it now has a good home on Geoff's new farm.

It was a good night for the first annual spring amphibian hunt.

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PLANT RECORDS

Dandelion - blooming in Head of Montague on Apr. 23 (JW) and on Peter's Rd. on the same date (WEC).

Poplar - catkins open in Fort Augustus and Scotchfort on Apr. 7 (JDM).

Willow - catkins open (not staminate) in Donagh and Bonshaw (JDM); staminate flowers in Donagh on May 1 (JDM).

Alder - catkins opening in Donagh on Apr. 15 (JDM).

Serviceberry - blooming in Gladstone on May 24 (JW).

Blueberry - blooming in Gladstone on May 24 (JW).

Wild Cherry - blooming in Gladstone on May. 24 (JW).

Marsh Marigold - blooming in Commercial Cross on May 25 (WEC).

Painted Trillium - blooming in Milltown Cross on May 28 (WEC).

Rhodora - blooming in Commercial Cross on May 31 (WEC).

