

Frogwatch USA

End of Season Report, 2005

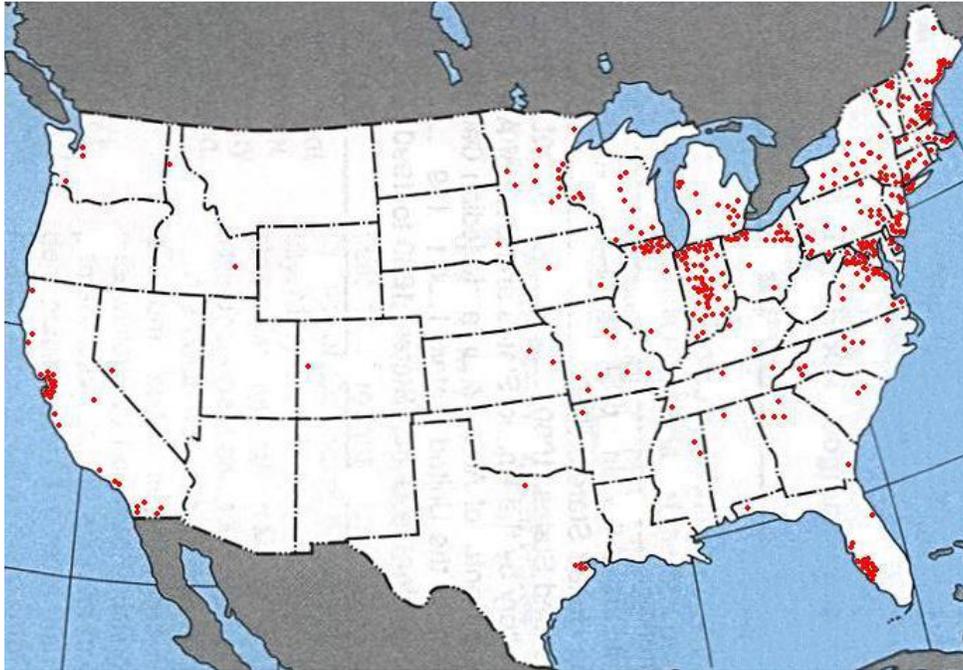
Introduction

Since 2002, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has been partnering with the United States geological Survey (USGS) to administer a hands-on, volunteer based amphibian monitoring program called Frogwatch USA. The Frogwatch program began in response to a noticeable decline in frog and toad populations across the country and around the world. The idea was to gather scientifically creditable data to prove such a decline was in fact occurring while at the same time educating the public about amphibians and the probable causes for their recent declines.

The main goal for the 2005 season was to reconnect with the Frogwatch volunteers, many of whom felt abandoned after their emails and phone calls went unanswered for several months as the program transition from the Washington DC office to the Reston office. New tools were tested in order to improve communication between NWF headquarters and Frogwatch volunteers as well as to encourage interaction among the volunteers.

Volunteers

Interest and participation in Frogwatch USA has increased greatly since the program began. From 1998 through June 2005, a total of 5,031 individuals registered 4,384 monitoring sites. Of those registrations, 1,365 observers (~27%) actually collected data at 1,903 sites (~43%).



This map indicates the location of individual Frogwatch USA sites where volunteers collected data in 2005.

During the 2005 season, Frogwatch USA received data from 348 volunteers regarding 465 different sites across the country. Out of the 344 active volunteers, 201 (58%) had sent data to Frogwatch USA in previous years. The remaining 147 (42%) registered and began reporting in 2005. Out of the 465 active monitoring sites, 288 (62%) had been monitored before. The remaining 177 (38%) were registered in 2005.

New Observers	147	New Sites	177
Returning Observers	201	Returning Sites	288
Total Observers	348	Total Sites	465

This table indicates the numbers of new and returning volunteers as well as new and returning monitoring sites for the 2005 season.

From January through June of 2005, data for a total of 2,800 monitoring visits was submitted by Frogwatch volunteers. The state of Maryland yielded the highest number of observers as well as the most total visits. The tables below show the ten states with the highest number of total observers as well as the highest number of total monitoring visits for 2005.

States with the most observers		States with the most visits	
State	# of observers	State	Total # of visits
MD	399	MD	2,856
NY	327	OH	2,194
CA	315	IN	1,896
IN	283	NY	1,750
PA	260	NH	996
OH	246	PA	882
TX	221	CA	872
VA	221	VA	584
MA	153	ME	489
WI	134	CT	415

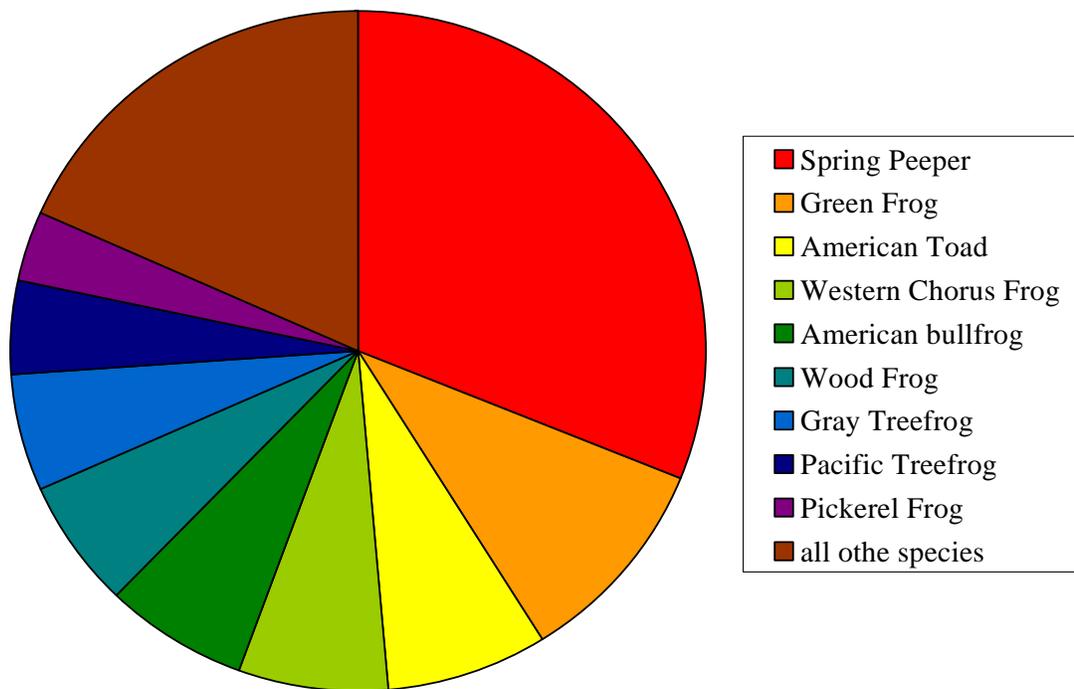
Since 1998, Frogwatch observers have made 18,272 separate visits to survey for frogs and toads. The table below presents the number of monitoring visits made to registered sites each year.

Year	# of visits
1998	18
1999	1,060
2000	2,017
2001	1,471
2002	2,277
2003	3,960
2004	4,669
2005 (Through June)	2,800
Total	18,272

Species Information

Fifty-eight separate species were reported by Frogwatch volunteers this year which is the highest number of species yet recorded during any one season. The most commonly reported frog was the Spring Peeper. The Peeper has a very distinctive call which is easy to recognize and this may be part of the reason why the Peeper was reported so often.

Most Commonly Reported Species, January - June 2005



Looking Forward

In the coming year the Frogwatch USA program will continue to actively retain and cultivate its many wonderful volunteers. The program is currently putting together a plan for recognizing active volunteers and spot lighting Frogwatchers who have been with the program for multiple seasons. Frogwatch volunteers are being added to the general volunteer database so they can be encouraged to attend local events which center on amphibians and water quality. They will also be invited to volunteer appreciation ceremonies. In order to increase volunteer retention, the program will be testing in-person trainings led by habitat stewards across the country. We hope these trainings will leave the Frogwatchers more confident in their abilities and as set them up with a large, local support network.

In addition to retaining previous volunteers, the program also needs to take steps to increase recruitment for the 2006 season. We know that the number of new volunteers was in decline this season for the first time in several years and this may mean the program needs a more aggressive recruitment plan.

NWF can take pride knowing that Frogwatch USA has interested a great many people in nature, has gotten them outside, and has brought the decline of amphibians to their attention. In this way, the Frogwatch program is a great success and will continue to be one so long as the program supports its volunteers.