

## Frequently Asked Questions



Yellow Rail  
by Judie Shore

### What if it starts to rain while I'm doing a survey?

**Amphibian Surveys** - Nights that are damp, foggy or have light rain falling are ideal, especially for your first survey. However, avoid persistent or heavy rainfall. Early in the season, it is best to survey shortly after the first or second warm spring shower. Later, choose a night with a warm temperature.

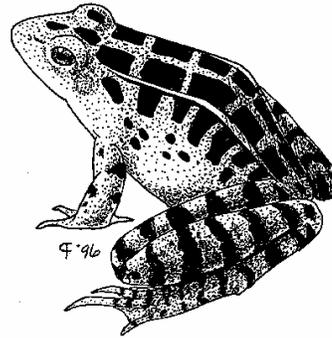
**Bird Surveys** - All but the lightest drizzle suppresses bird activity and interferes with your ability to hear, not to mention soaking you and your forms and generally making you miserable! If it starts to rain during your survey, you should cancel the survey and re-do it later.

### Can I count unlisted bird species?

Please feel free to add bird species that are not listed on the summary sheet to the empty lines at the end of the list. The summary sheet is a list of bird species most commonly observed in marshes. If you add more species to the list, please print in block capitals and provide the full name of the species (e.g., EUROPEAN STARLING not Starling).

### Why are amphibian surveys three minutes in length?

Studies have shown that the first minute of listening provides most of the information a surveyor will collect. Three minutes is recommended so that you can confirm your identification and perhaps detect calls missed during the first minute. But remember, you need to start your three minute survey *at least* one minute after arriving at the station because your arrival may have temporarily silenced the amphibians. If you find the amphibians take longer to resume calling, you may want to increase the time you spend at each station before you begin the survey. Just ensure that you standardize the length of time you wait at each station before starting the survey, for every visit and for every year.



Pickerel Frog  
by Christine Friedrichsmeier

### Where can I find more information about marsh bird and amphibian species?

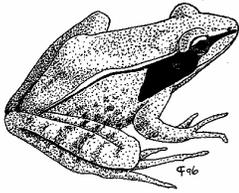
There are several references that are useful for learning more about marsh species. *Peterson's Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America*, *National Geographic Guide to Birds of North America*, *Peterson's Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern/Central North America* and the *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Reptiles and Amphibians* are easy to use, beautifully illustrated books that are available at most bookstores.

### Why wait until nightfall to conduct amphibian surveys when I can hear them calling earlier in the evening?

There are times when you can hear amphibians calling during the day but when you go out at night fewer or no amphibians are calling. What happened? Basically, the warm sunny moist conditions during the day may encourage amphibians to call but the night-time water temperature and air temperature are still too cold for the amphibians to breed. These are inappropriate conditions for

surveying and if surveys are conducted they might reveal fewer frogs and toads than if done during the appropriate evening conditions. **Wait until the water or night-time air temperature warms up.** This may only take a day or two for a small marshy pond but it will take longer for a coastal marsh on a large water body such as Lake Erie or Lake Superior. Remember that an open sunlit pond will warm up quicker than a pond in a shady wooded area.

We need all data collected using the standardized methodology to help minimize variation and bias. **Please follow the survey protocol and guidelines to ensure that your data can be used in all future analyses.** It helps to review the manual annually – before you conduct your first survey of the season.



Wood Frog  
by Christine Friedrichsmeier

### **For amphibian surveys, what if the temperature increases to appropriate conditions early in the season and then plummets?**

Temperature fluctuations can create some difficulties in deciding whether to conduct a survey on a particular night. The temperature guidelines should always be considered more important than the date guidelines. This is very important for amphibians that breed early in the season such as Wood Frogs, which breed in large numbers after the first or second warm rainfall. It is best to monitor the weather and listen to any ponds that are near your home.

When that first warm rainfall occurs and you hear amphibians, try to get out and survey. If the temperature then plummets, don't worry about it. Next, wait until the weather conditions are appropriate for the second survey ( $>13^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $>55^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). **For the second and third surveys don't look for the ideal conditions, but rather look for the best possible combinations of conditions** (close to ideal temperature, reasonably moist and low wind). Why? It's very easy to completely miss the amphibians when waiting for the "perfect" conditions. Keep in mind that wind is extremely important. Amphibians will not be calling in high winds (greater than a Beaufort scale of 3) and your ability to hear their calls will be diminished.

### **Do I conduct surveys at the same hour or at the same time after sunrise or before dark (for birds), or after dark (for amphibians)?**

While conducting surveys at the same time may be convenient, it is not absolutely necessary, just as long as you conduct the surveys within the standardized time frame.

**Amphibian Surveys** — These surveys should start one half hour after sunset and end before midnight. Northern routes, those north of the 47<sup>th</sup> parallel, can start after 10:00 pm and end after midnight. It is almost impossible to start all of your surveys at the same time. Dusk changes daily and the time you conduct your first visit can be much earlier than the time you begin your third visit.

**Bird Surveys** — Bird surveys can occur during either the morning only or the evening only. Once a route is established as a morning or evening route, it has to stay that way. Morning routes can begin as early as one half-hour before sunrise and end no later than 10:00 am, when most marsh birds cease calling. Evening surveys begin as early as 4 hours before sunset and must be completed by dark. As with amphibian surveys, start and stop times will change from visit to visit as the seasons progress.

We do ask that you survey the stations on your route in the **same order for each visit and in that same order every year.**