



Land

Letter

Waukesha County Citizens Protecting Waukesha County's Remaining Natural Areas

Volume 16 No.1

April 2008

2008 Annual Meeting



Susan VanVleet and George Dionisopoulos at the Annual Meeting



Above- Gary Murray, Heather Zoerb visit with Jill Bedford



Left- Barbara and Ron Poe, Steve Schmuki and Lisa Conley



2008 Master of Ceremonies Phil Hinman and his wife Gina Hinman were seated with Dennis Pelzek

Featured speaker Robert Hay of the DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources and Neil O'Reilly set up the slide show.



Amphibians and Reptiles

Bob Hay's talk on amphibians and reptiles at our Annual Meeting sent us into our newsletter archives to re-read Marlin Johnson's article on "Frogs and Toads of Waukesha County" from our Spring 2002 newsletter. When we decided to re-run this article, Professor Johnson had some exciting news. He had not included information about the wood frog in his 2002 article, as this species was not believed to be found in Waukesha County. However, last spring the Waukesha County Land Conservancy's land manager, Jason Dare, heard wood frogs at our Tamarack Swamp Preserve in Menomonee Falls! Hooray for us for protecting a rare species' habitat!

If this peaks your interest in frog identification, stop in at Retzer Nature Center's gift shop. They sell an audio cassette of Wisconsin frog calls for \$10. Or, for \$14.95, there is a field guide with pictures of Wisconsin frogs that comes with a CD of their calls.

The Frogs and Toads of Waukesha County

by Marlin Johnson

Imagine a Spring without frogs and toads...imagine how silent Spring would be. We count on croaks, peeps and trills to announce the end of winter...that Spring is really here. When the Waukesha Land Conservancy saves a prairie, woodland or wetland, it also saves the voices of nature and our lives are all the richer for it. Knowing the kinds, behavior and ecology of frogs and toads in our landscape leads to a greater appreciation and a more caring attitude toward these often-maligned creatures.

IDENTIFICATION OF WAUKESHA COUNTY FROGS AND TOAD

There are eleven kinds of frogs and one toad found in Wisconsin. The descriptions below only include those found in our county. Two frogs on the state list, Blanchard's cricket frog and mink frog are not found in Waukesha County and therefore are not included in the descriptions.

Tree Frogs (Family: *Hylidae*)

Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*) (.7-1.1")

Spring peepers can be recognized by their small size and irregular dark "X" on the light tan to brown back. Like other tree frogs, peepers have slightly enlarged toe pads which allow them to grip and climb on vertical surfaces. The call is a very shrill repetitive 'peep', which, on some rainy nights, can be absolutely deafening.



Pickerel Frog (*Rana palustris*)

Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*) (.7-1.2")

To identify this small frog look for three long, broken dark brown strips down the back on a background color of pale green, tan, olive or gray. Skin is slightly bumpy and the toes end in slightly expanded pads. The voice of the chorus frog sounds like running your fingernail down the line of the teeth of a high-quality plastic comb.

Eastern Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla versicolor*) (1.5 -2.0")

Cope's Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) (1.25-2.0")

These two frogs will be treated together since they are very difficult to separate by sight. Gray tree frogs have moist, warty skins and large adhesive pads on the tips of the toes. They are capable of considerable color change to match their background varying from light gray to brown, to pale green or any color in between. (The change from one color to another may take an hour or more.) One or more irregular dark blotches outlined in black may be visible on the back. The belly is white and the underside of the hind limbs and groin is bright yellow or orange. Breeding calls of the two species is the best way to identify them. Eastern gray tree frogs give a loud, musical trill lasting from .5-3 seconds; Cope's gray tree frog's call is faster, harsher, and a more nasal trill.

True Frogs (Family: *Ranidae*)

Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*) (2.0-3.5")

Pickerel Frog (*Rana palustris*) (1.75-3.25")

Many people will remember the leopard frog as the pickled frog they dissected in their biology classes. It is identified by scattered round black spots bordered in a yellow halo on a background of green, greenish brown or brown. The male's call is a low rumbling snore somewhat like

(Continued on Page 5)

Announcing a Volunteer Work Opportunity

Saturday, April 26, 9:00 AM. Help is needed to plant trees at Nelson's Woods Preserve. Take Main Street south from the Village of Dousman about 1 mile to the bend in the road.

If you are interested in helping with a controlled burn, please call or email Jason at 262-582-3051 or jason_dare@hotmail.com

Join Us for a Spring Tour:

Saturday, April 26, 1:00 PM. Tour of the Ottawa Wildlife Refuge led by Land Manager Jason Dare. Meet in the parking lot on the east side of Main Street in Dousman, just north of the bike trail.

Sunday, May 18, 1:00 PM. Tour of the Hartland Marsh Preserve led by biologist Marlin Johnson. Meet in the parking lot of the Cottonwood Ave. wayside, ½ mile south of the cottonwood Avenue bridge over the Bark River just south of the Village of Hartland.

Marlin Johnson has offered to give private tours to any members on any of WCLC's properties. Call or email him to set up a time at 262-965-2227 or marlin.johnson@uwc.edu

Memorials and Honorariums

The Waukesha County Land Conservancy acknowledges donations made in memory of::

Iris Amend
Peggy Surles
Stephen Snyder Jr

Donations were made in honor of:

Anthony and Donna Meyer
Don and Lisa Murn

Wish List for Land Management

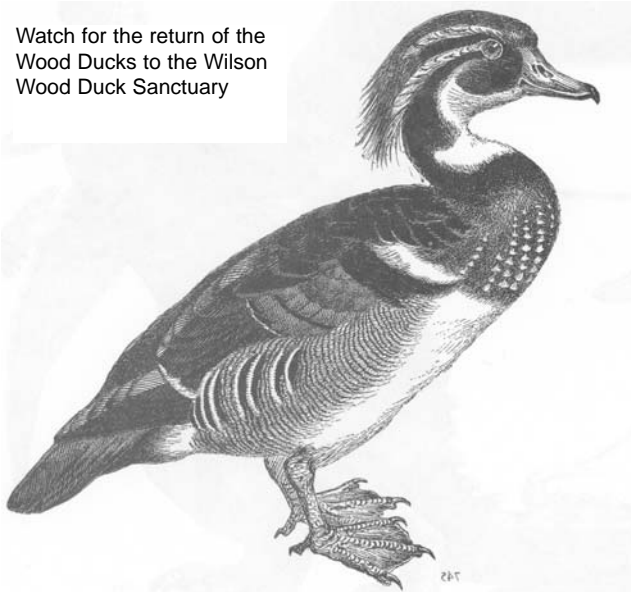
Do you know of a company that would like to support the land management work of the Waukesha County Land Conservancy? Here is a project that would be perfect for them:

Tree Protectors Needed:

The Waukesha County Land conservancy will be planting 1000 tree seedlings on one of our sites this spring. We need 4-foot tall tree protectors to keep deer from eating the seedlings. We would also like to stake down 3'x3' Tree Mats on the ground around each tree to inhibit competition from weeds. Four foot protectors cost \$3.29 each, which equals \$3290 for 1000 of them. Tree Mats are \$.80 each (\$800 for 1000) plus shipping costs.

If you know of a company that is looking for a way to support the Waukesha County Land Conservancy, please have them call 262-821-2044. Any contributions to this critical land management need will be greatly appreciated.

Watch for the return of the Wood Ducks to the Wilson Wood Duck Sanctuary



Frogs and Toads of Waukesha County

Continued from Page 2

dragging your finger over a tightly stretched balloon. When squeezed by a predator both sexes will give a loud pitiful scream.

The pickerel frog is rare in Waukesha County and in the state in general. It can be distinguished from leopard frogs by spots being more square and arranged in two rows on the back and by having bright yellow or orange color on the groin and underside of hind legs. The call is a low-pitched snore similar to leopard frog but shorter and with less carrying power.

Bull Frog (*Rana catesbeiana*) (5.5-7")

Distinguishing characteristics of the bullfrog are its large size; its green, green yellow, olive or brown color; and the presence of a ridge or fold of skin beginning at the eye and curving behind the 'ear drum' to the shoulder. It also has large hind legs with drumsticks the size of a small chicken. (These are the "frog legs" eaten in restaurants and the reason bullfrogs are often used in frog jumping contests.) Adult males have bright yellow chins during breeding time and the eardrum is larger than the eye (female eyes are about the same size as its eardrum). The male call is a low pitched, resonating "brrr-rrr-rum" or "jug-o-rum". When disturbed they take a series of fast short hops on the surface and give a "yelp" or "burp". When seized by a predator they produce a piercing scream or wail.

Green Frog (*Rana clamitans*) (2.4-3.5")

Green frogs have a light to dark olive green or brown background color dotted with small dark spots. A ridge of skin extends from each eye to about 1/2-2/3 along the back. Mature males have a bright yellow throat and an "eardrum" larger than the eye. Females have cream-colored throats and "eardrum" about the same size as eye. The voice of the male green frog is a "clung" or "K Tung! K Tung!" like strumming on a loose banjo string. When disturbed both sexes give a loud squeaking cry and hide themselves in bottom mud.

Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*) (2-2.5")

This woodland frog is distinguished by its dark brown mask behind the eye, a dark stripe from the eye to the snout and a white line along the upper lip. Males are darker, especially during the breeding season, and are smaller than the females. Wood frogs sound like quacking ducks with a rolling, chuckling sound. Distribution in Waukesha County appears to be restricted to the northeastern corner. We have heard them at our Tamarack Swamp Preserve in Menomonee Falls.

True Toads (Family: *Bufonidae*)

American Toad (*Bufo americanus*) (2 to 3.5")

American toad is the only toad found in Wisconsin. It is recognized by its stoutness and dry warty skin. (Toads do not cause warts in humans.) Color ranges from tan to brown to gray or olive with darker round spots on back, each of which surround one or two warts. Large brown glands are located behind the eyes. The voice of males is a prolonged, high-pitched trill that may last over 30 seconds.

CONSERVATION

We often associate frogs and toads with aquatic habitats but in fact over half of our species spend only a few weeks of their year in water as breeding adults and the rest of the time in terrestrial situations foraging for food or hibernating. It is as critical to save swamps, grassy meadows and woodlands near the breeding ponds as it is the water body itself. Frogs and toads cannot survive without both in their landscape. In addition, they must be able to migrate safely between these sites. Ecological barriers such as highways, railroads and large expanses of lawns and fields are a deterrent to such movements. We need to keep this in mind as we work to save habitat.

Waukesha Land Conservancy cares about ALL of nature - even slimy frogs and warty toads. With your continued support, we can keep their voices singing!

References:

Amphibians of Wisconsin, Rebecca Christoffel, Robert Hay and Michelle Wolfgram, DNR publication: PUB-ER-105 2001.

Wisconsin Frogs (includes CD of Wisconsin frog calls), Randy Korb, Northeastern Wisconsin Audubon, Inc., Green Bay, WI.

Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*)



