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Our Local Vocal Amphibians

One of the great aspects of living in northern Ohio is having the opportunity to experience all the seasons! Ok, sometimes it is a bit much when they all happen within a 24-hour period, but that just adds to the thrill and unique experiences that Seneca County has to offer.

Spring is an amazing time. As temperatures start flirting with 50- and 60-degree days and the daylight is noticeably lasting longer, plants and animals are also re-emerging and migrating back through. You may have already noticed the red-winged blackbirds that usually return the last week in February, closely followed by Killdeer and turkey vultures. Familiar chirping is starting to fill the winter silence of the past few months.

You may also be hearing some calls right now that belong to another type of animal. We are so fortunate to have frogs and toads in this area, some of which begin calling as early as February and others that extend into late summer.

The lure of these vocal amphibians is not just hypnotic for humans, but is the mating call of the males of their species to the females of their species. These calls also help to determine breeding territories for some species.

Do you know who is making the call? If you are hearing a frog or toad in this area, identification is VERY easy. There are only 10 common species in this area to choose from and all the calls sound extremely different.

Here is a challenge for you through this spring and summer... Try your ear at frog and toad identification:

Wood Frog – makes a series of five or six explosive clucking notes (like a chicken)

Spring Peeper – makes a chick-like sound “Peep”

Western Chorus Frog – sounds like running a finger down the teeth of a stiff comb

Northern Leopard Frog – sounds like someone snoring or like rubbing your thumb over a balloon

Eastern Cricket Frog – sounds like marbles quickly tapping together

Tree Frogs – resembles the trilling call of a woodpecker, lasting 1-4 seconds (Gray & Cope’s Tree frogs both sound similar, so we will lump into one for your challenge)

American Toad – high-pitch trill

Fowler’s Toad – unmusical nasally “w-a-a-a-a” sound lasting up to four seconds

Green Frog – banjo string being plucked

Bullfrog – sounds like someone saying “Jug-O-rum” very low and slurred together

After conducting frog and toad call surveys for many years with a variety of volunteers, I do need to mention something I often came across. Not everyone can hear all the different species calls – even if the frog is only a few feet away from them. Women tend to lose lower-register (low-octave) hearing and cannot hear, for instance, Northern Leopard Frog calls. Conversely, men tend to lose upper-register (upper-octave) hearing and often cannot hear several of the high-frequency frog species.

So, for the volunteers and spouses who found out that they couldn’t hear certain frequencies, I am happy to report, it actually helped their marriages... they realized that their significant other was not just ignoring them, but instead, needed to visit a hearing specialist.

To learn more about frogs and toads and which aquatic habitat each likes to live in, visit www.ohiodnr.gov to access the field guide series, which includes the Field Guide to Amphibians of Ohio.

To hear frogs and toads in the Seneca Parks, visit a variety of parks that have water. Luckily, most of your parks do have different types of water bodies, including ditches, creeks, ponds, rivers, and wetlands. Each habitat type is home to different species, so visit them all!

For Seneca Parks locations and maps, visit www.senecacountyparks.com.