

LOUISIANA AMPHIBIAN MONITORING PROGRAM (LAMP)

PARTICIPANT GUIDANCE Phase II – Fixed Sites

Phase I of LAMP went into operation in 1997 with the establishment and running of randomly selected calling amphibian survey routes throughout the state. Phase I is now gathering momentum with the addition of more routes and will continue indefinitely, becoming an invaluable source of information on amphibian population trends.

Now LAMP is adding **Phase II** to its arsenal of data gathering. Phase II will consist of calling amphibian surveys at fixed sites. These sites may be wetlands associated with schools, nature centers or other institutions or wetlands in parks, national forests, wildlife management areas or even on private lands. The only **criteria** for establishing a site are **1)** that it be a wetland used by frogs and/or toads for breeding, **2)** that monitoring be done with the knowledge and permission of the landowner, and **3)** that volunteers be available to monitor the site.

How will Phase II work? As an example, let's say the staff of a nature center wants to participate by monitoring a wetland on their facility's property. They have received a package consisting of this guidance document, a site description form and a data entry form from the state LAMP coordinator (LAMP Central, see below). The new volunteers will **first fill out the site description form and copy it to LAMP Central**. This will ensure that the areas being monitored are the same from year to year and the description will serve as the baseline assessment should the habitat change over time.

There are eight items to complete on the site description form. "**Site name**" will usually just be the name of the facility or area such as "Anytown Nature Center" or "Anyplace State Park." The site name may need to be more specific, especially if several wetlands on the site will be monitored, as in "Anytown Nature Center-north pond" and "Anytown Nature Center-swamp boardwalk." "**Parish**" and "**Nearest Town**" are self explanatory. "**Author**" is the name of the person writing the site description and "**Date of Description**" is the date it is completed.

"**General location of site**" should be explicit directions which would enable anyone unfamiliar with the institution or area to find their way to it. "**Specific location of amphibian breeding site**" should enable anyone unfamiliar with the site to walk right to it and should eventually include GPS coordinates. Some of the characteristics to be included in "**description of breeding site**" are given on the form. The description should give someone who has never visited the site an accurate, detailed mental picture of the site. Photographs of the site, preferably showing seasonal changes, should be sent in along with the site description form. Should changes occur to the site to the extent that the description no longer conveys an accurate mental image, the description should be updated.

At this point in the process, the monitoring site is established and ready to be surveyed. **When to survey** a fixed site is the same as for the survey routes: three times per year, one night each during the following windows:

January 1-February 10	42 days
February 26-April 7	42 days
April 27-June 7	42 days

For northern Louisiana (areas 1-3) this schedule is shifted back one month:

January 27-March 8	42 days
March 27-May 7	42 days
May 27-July 7	42 days

This is the minimum number of nights desired. Should volunteers have the time and inclination to monitor their sites for calling amphibians every night of the year, LAMP would gladly accept their data. Consistency in the timing of surveys is important. For example, a site should not be surveyed at the beginning of January, the end of March, and not at all in May during one year and then at the end of January, the beginning of March, and six times in May during the following year if it can be helped. Nights following significant rain events should be chosen to conduct surveys. Surveyors should, ideally, arrive at their site just before dark to minimize disturbance and maximize safety. The actual survey should begin just after dark. Volunteers should listen for 5 minutes per site and start and end times should be recorded on the data sheet.

The **general procedure** for conducting a survey at a fixed site is much the same as for a survey route except that there is only one “stop” instead of 10. All frogs and toads heard during the time of the survey should be recorded by checking the appropriate abundance code box(es) next to the species name.

1	=	Individuals can be counted; there is space between calls
2	=	Calls of individuals can be distinguished but there is some overlapping of calls
3	=	Full chorus, calls are constant, continuous and overlapping

If the frogs/toads begin at a code 1 level but work up to a code 3 chorus, all three boxes may be checked and the situation may be mentioned in the “notes” section of the data sheet. Please fill in as much of the data sheet as possible. Copies of completed data sheets should be sent in to **LAMP Central, Jeff Boundy, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898, email: jboundy@wlf.la.gov, phone 225-765-2823, FAX 225-765-2818** either one at a time soon after each survey is completed or all together at the end of the survey season.

Equipment needed for these surveys includes:

- Writing Material. Please use pencil to record data.
- Tape Recorder. If a surveyor is new to this project, or just needs some assurance on identifications, it would be a good idea to tape the frogs in question and let an experienced person assist with confirmation, or compare the calls to the training CD. Reasonable quality, inexpensive, hand held tape recorders should suffice.
- Thermometer. Any inexpensive but reasonable quality one will do.
- Flashlight. For making notes, finding specimens for identity confirmation, or for emergencies.
- Rubber Boots. You may have to get your feet wet.

Birds. There is considerable interest in declining populations of night-calling birds. Any of these heard during the survey should be indicated BY NAME AND NUMBER on the data sheet. A partial list of these birds includes:

3570 great horned owl	4160 Chuck-will's-widow
3680 barred owl	4200 common nighthawk
3730 eastern screech owl	2280 American woodcock

Training and References

CDs. CDs are available to assist in training new volunteers, or to refresh anyone who wishes it. The CDs illustrate the species expected to be in Louisiana. Examples of how to apply the "1-2-3" categories of abundance are also given. A self-test section is included at the end of each tape.

References. Many references could be useful to someone doing these surveys. Two outstanding ones would be:

Conant, R., and J. T. Collins. 1991. Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America. Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts.

Other guides to consider would be the Golden Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians and the Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Reptiles and Amphibians.

AND

Dundee, H., and D. Rossman. 1989. Amphibians and Reptiles of Louisiana. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Froglog. For ongoing information regarding the global effort to investigate amphibian decline, the quarterly newsletter of the Declining Amphibian Population Task Force is called Froglog and subscriptions are available free from John Wilkinson, Editor, Dept. of Biological Sciences, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, United Kingdom. E-mail: daptf@open.ac.uk

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THIS EFFORT,

THANKS AND GOOD LUCK!