



# TRIBUTARY

Spring 2008

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center  
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## Don't Release Those Frogs!

Frog populations are declining all over the United States. Loss of habitat and pollution take their toll, but there is another threat to amphibians. Chytrid fungus causes a fatal infectious disease in amphibians called chytridiomycosis. This has been linked to serious declines and even extinctions of amphibian species. No controls have been found for this disease, which has affected amphibians in most of the world.

The fungus has spores that live in water, and amphibians coming in contact with infected water can pick up this highly contagious disease. There is more than one species of chytrid fungus, but one is specific to amphibians. It was first found in African clawed frogs.

This is the frog that many schools raise in the classroom and if they are released into the wild, they can infect native populations. **No captive amphibians should ever be released**, since they can spread this and other diseases. If you are a teacher, or if you know a teacher or pet-owner who has captive frogs, spread the word: Don't release captive amphibians!

More research is needed to discover exactly how this disease affects the animals. At least five species of frogs are known to have become extinct from the chytrid disease, and others are in danger of disappearing. One type of frog was only discovered in 1992, and by 2001 the species appeared to be extinct.

One way you can help amphibians is by participating in Frogwatch, a citizen science program from the USGS and National Wildlife Foundation. With your help, the scientists can keep track of populations. You can monitor frogs in your own backyard or help us here at Five Rivers—all you need to do is go out and listen to the calls. Join us for one of our Frogwatch programs this spring! (See our program schedule for details.)

Amphibians are indicators that measure the health of the environment, the proverbial "canary in the coal mine." Imagine the silence of a spring night without their songs.

—Dee Strnisa  
Water Education Specialist

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
Pete Grannis, Commissioner

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center  
Spring Program Schedule 2008

Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Participants should dress for the weather! We regret that we cannot accommodate organized youth groups at these programs. In the event of severe weather, programs may be cancelled. We welcome those who have any type of physical challenge; call ahead to let us know your needs. For further information, contact Five Rivers at (518) 475-0291 or 5rivers@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

Saturday, April 12      **PROJECT WET TEACHER WORKSHOP**      1:00-4:00 PM  
Project WET is Water Education for Teachers. Receive a manual of activities during this workshop about water science, aquatic wildlife and environmental issues. Pre-register by April 9. Teacher in-service credit can be coordinated through the Greater Capital Region Teacher Center.

Monday, April 14      *Family Fun:* NATURE IN BETWEEN SEASONS      10:00AM  
Who's waking up? After reading a seasonal book, we'll go outdoors to search for the first signs of spring. Then we return to the building for refreshments and watching the birds at the feeders. Please pre-register by April 12. Friends of Five Rivers members \$1.00 per family, non-members \$3.00.

Saturday April 19      *Family Fun:* WILD ANIMALS INDOORS      2:00 PM  
Come and learn about the wild animals in our exhibit room. Join us for a scavenger hunt and other activities to discover amazing facts about fish, turtles and owls. You may get to feed one of the animals.

Monday, April 21      *Homeschoolers:* MAMMALS      1:00PM  
Animal skulls, pelts, tracks and traces. Explore and interact with the environment while seeking signs of mammals. Bring along your journal; newcomers will receive a journal at the program. Materials fee: Friends of Five Rivers members \$1.00, non-members \$3.00.

Friday, April 25      **SPRING PEEPER WALK**      7:00 PM  
Peepers may be the smallest of frogs, but they are the noisiest! This program is a "Frogwatch," sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation. Bring flashlights and old shoes.

Saturday, April 26      *Watchable Wildlife:* AUDUBON'S BIRDS      10:00 AM  
How times have changed since the birth of the ornithologist John James Audubon on this date 223 years ago. In fact, some of the birds he painted no longer exist! Join us for a field study of birds as we compare the illustrations in Audubon's *The Birds of America* with our own sightings.

Thursday, May 1      *Family Fun:* SNIPE HUNT      7:00 PM  
Join us as we search field and fen for a rumor of snipe, the whisper of woodcock and other things that go bump in the night. Bring your own "snipe trap."

Saturday, May 3rd      **POND LIFE IN SPRING**      2:00 PM  
You'll get a chance to explore the wildlife living in some of Five Rivers' wetlands. May is a lively month for the pond, when many eggs are hatching and reptiles and amphibians are active.

Saturday, May 10                      *Cheep Thrills: BIRDING BY EAR*                      9:00 AM  
Come celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on a walking tour of the grounds as we engage in “sound science” at the height of the annual spring migration.

**THE EARLY BIRDER**

Walks are held on Thursday mornings: **May 8, 15, 22 and 29.**

**Join us at 7:00 AM for refreshments and feeder birds. The outdoor walk begins at 7:30.**

Beginners are always welcome! Bring binoculars and bird identification guides if you have them. We have some to lend, as well.

Saturday, May 10                      *How To Do It: LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE*                      2:00 PM  
Mid-May is a great time to learn the cardinal rules of enhancing the wildlife value of your yard. Join us for an indoor/outdoor discussion of site assessment, materials selection and placement.

Sunday, May 11                      PLANT POSSE                      2:00 PM  
Bring gloves and pitch in as we uproot non-native invasive plants that threaten native ecosystems. Our quarry will be garlic mustard, a wildflower that chokes out native forest species.

Friday, May 23                      FROGWATCH                      7:00 PM  
A search for the noisy singers of the night! We’ll acquaint you with the sounds of local frogs and view some live animals, and then go outdoors to listen for calls. Bring flashlights and old shoes.

Saturday May 24                      *Backyard Animals Series: SQUIRRELS*                      10:00 AM  
Make your own squirrel treat, listen to a squirrel story and go for an outdoor walk to look for signs of these crazy critters. Please call to pre-register, space is limited. Materials fee: \$2 per family.

Saturday, May 31                      BUGS, BEETLES AND BEES                      2:00 PM  
On this walk we will look for and perhaps catch some of the insects of early spring. Bring your nets or other equipment; we have some to share.

Saturday June 7                      OLD FIELD TRAIL WALK                      2:00 PM  
Come explore one of Five Rivers’ best-loved trails. We’ll look for signs of wildlife and discover how animals use the meadow to find food, water and shelter.

Friday, June 13                      FROGWATCH                      7:00 PM  
June brings the deep calls of the bullfrog, and we’ll look and listen for signs of other wildlife as well. Bring flashlights and old shoes.

Saturday, June 14                      DRAGONFLY CENSUS                      2:00PM  
For this program we invite experts in the field of dragonfly identification to help us census the Center’s populations. Bring your bug-catching equipment or use the Center's.

Wednesday, June 18                      *Homeschoolers: FROGWATCH*                      7:00 PM  
Learn how to identify frogs by their call, and find out why scientists are encouraging citizen scientists to help them monitor frogs. Bring your journals!

Friday, June 20                      SOLSTICE CELEBRATION                      7:00 PM  
Summer begins, and the flowers are in full bloom! During this walk we'll search out and enjoy the magical flowers of Midsummer's Eve and learn their lore.

Saturday, June 21                      BEWARE! ALIEN PLANT INVADERS                      10:00 AM  
An investigation of aquatic and terrestrial invasive plants on the property, including water chestnut, garlic mustard and Japanese bittersweet. We will observe and discuss plant adaptations, consequences of invasion, and how you and your family can join the Five Rivers' Plant Posse.

Wednesday, June 25                      *Homeschoolers:* STREAM WALK                      2:00 PM  
During this interactive exploration, families will make a census of a section of stream, observing and recording the life in their plot. Bring your journals and old shoes.

Saturday June 28                      BEGINNING NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR ADULTS                      10:00 AM  
Learn techniques for improving your nature photography skills. Topics will include landscapes, wildlife, and close-ups. Digital and 35mm photographers are welcome. Pre-register by June 26. Space is limited.

Saturday, July 5                      *Family Fun:* 11th ANNUAL BUTTERFLY COUNT                      2:00 PM  
Join us for a close up look at common butterflies of the Capital District as we continue our annual catch-and-release census. Nets or binoculars are welcome. Pre-register by Friday, June 27.