

Frog Watch and Turtle Tally

Frog Watch and Turtle Tally are part of a national initiative to encourage community members of all ages to participate in the monitoring of reptiles and amphibians in their community. The Toronto Zoo's Adopt-A-Pond Program is the coordinator in Ontario for this fun and interactive program. (Frog Watch Ontario, 2011)

In 2007 Virginia Cook, Dianne More and I (Casey Cook), attended the "Wild About Wetlands" seminar at Avery Beach in Huntsville, a Stewardship Nature Quest initiative hosted by the Parry Sound-Muskoka Stewardship Network and the Muskoka Heritage Foundation. The presenter was Ian McIntosh, Coordinator of the Adopt-A-Pond Program at the Toronto Zoo. This was a wonderful activity with all age groups attending and participating in a study of reptiles and amphibians. Ian introduced the program with a Power Point presentation identifying the indigenous species to Ontario, their habitat and habits, risks to their continued survival and initiatives that are being put into place for their protection.

Similar to many species in the wild, these creatures are referred to as "indicator species". This simply means; by their presence or absence, scientists can determine the health of a water body or ecosystem. They are sensitive to human activities and the continued loss of their wetland homes, negative impacts due to pollution and development, pose a very serious threat to their numbers and continued existence. (Frog Watch Ontario, 2011)

This activity can be enjoyed by the entire family and is widely used in schools and educational institutes to help students gain a new respect for the environment. The on-line link to the program allows you to study the different species, learn to identify them in the wild by both their appearance and markings and submit the data to help understand their habits and habitat range. To participate in the program, it is simply a matter of going to the website and learning basic ID features then:

- Taking a walk or looking around the shoreline - spotting a frog, turtle, salamander, lizard, snake
- Make note of the area, time of day, weather conditions, what were they doing?
- Take a picture if you are able (it will become habit to carry a camera with you at all times to record these wonderful creatures) and the photo's can be submitted to the data site
- Go Online at: <http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/> follow the links to submit your data.

(Frog Watch Ontario, 2011)

The program has a quarterly newsletter called the "Amphibian Voice". Ril Lake has been featured in this paper on two occasions, Summer 2008 and Fall 2008 issues, with a submitted photo and an article written by Courtney Felton.

Thank you and I hope you and your family will help with the protection of these important creatures in our Ril Lake area!

Submitted By: Casey Cook, EMT, ET – Sept 2011 (All references are recorded in the Website Reference Document)