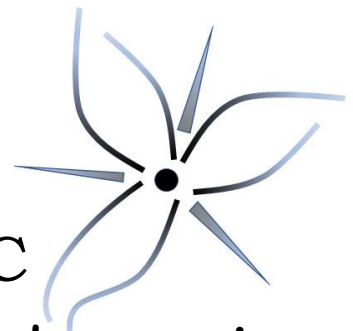




Managing Farm Ponds for Amphibians and other Wildlife



Trillium Consulting, LLC

Enjoy the sights and sounds of summer on the farm. One of the benefits of rural life is hearing the frogs calling in the spring. Your farm pond can become a magnet for wildlife. Farm ponds provide drinking water for turkeys and deer, nesting habitat for ducks, breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders, aquatic insects for swallows, and hiding places for turtles, salamanders, and snakes.

Frogs and salamanders are in trouble. Approximately 1/3 of the world's 7,000 species of amphibians are threatened with extinction. Chytrid fungus is killing frogs across the globe and has recently been discovered in western Wisconsin. Your farm pond can provide much-needed habitat.



Chorus frog by Josh Kapfer

At least ten species of frogs and salamanders make farm ponds their home in the Driftless Area. Tree frogs, toads, green frogs, spring peepers, chorus frogs, and leopard frogs are the most likely occupants.



Managing Healthy Farm Ponds

Fish eat tadpoles.

- Don't put fish in the pond.
- Conserve ephemeral ponds (created by snowmelt and spring rains) that lack fish.

Inventory your pond.

- Learn the [frogs of Wisconsin](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/herps.asp?mode=table&group=Frogs):
<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/herps.asp?mode=table&group=Frogs>
- Document your frogs using Frogwatch:
<https://www.aza.org/frogwatch>

High nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the pond reduce amphibian reproduction and survival. Polluted water harms livestock.

- Fence out cattle and other grazers.
- Don't let cattle drink from polluted waters.
- Maintain a 200 meter grass buffer around the pond.
- Plant prairie flowers and grasses in the buffer area.

Good pond design supports more wildlife.

- Dikes can wash out during heavy rains; get professional engineering help with pond design.
- Create some shallow water near pond edges for tadpoles, young frogs, turtles, and shorebirds.
- Soften pond edges with aquatic vegetation.
- Incorporate rock piles, sticks, or logs as resting and hiding places for frogs, turtles, snakes, bees, and rabbits.

Leopard frogs, grassland birds, and some snakes spend the summer in hay fields. There is high mortality from mowing if breeding ponds are adjacent to hayfields.

- Delay mowing until July 15 to benefit grassland birds. Unfortunately, frogs and snakes use hayfields spring, summer, and fall.
- Drive slow with the mower - start in the middle and mow to the edges. Some critters may be able to escape.
- When siting a new pond, locate it away from roads and potential hay fields.



Leopard frog
by Mark Roth

For more information...

- Creating Frog Friendly Landscape Ponds:
<https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/publications/nh/nh0940.pdf>
- Knutson, M.G., et. al. 2018. Habitat selection, movement patterns, and hazards encountered by northern leopard frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*) in an agricultural landscape. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 13:113-130.
- Knutson, M.G., et al. 2004. Agricultural ponds support amphibian populations. *Ecological Applications* 14:669-684.