



Midwest PARC Quarterly Newsletter - April 2026

Compiled by members of the **Outreach and Communications Task Team (OCTT)**
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Herp Highlight: American Toad

Author: Callie Klatt Golba

Who else grew up catching toads? For many herpetologists, getting their hands on these common amphibians that hop throughout the Midwestern United States was their first exposure to herpetology. This past weekend in Indiana, I was lucky to admire the glory of toads with my own children and observe the nighttime cacophony of a congregation of mating toads.

American toads (*Anaxyrus americanus*) are widespread in woodlands, prairies, and other upland areas where they have yearly access to ephemeral breeding pools. This medium sized toad has warty skin, a mottled belly pattern, and a grumpy face. To distinguish them from Fowler's toads (*A. fowleri*), try counting the number of warts within black spots on their back. You can even try



out my newly developed mnemonic: “One or two? Red, white, and blue. Three or more? Fowler’s galore!”



You also might be able to tell these toad species apart from timing of breeding and their calls. American toads breed earlier in the season. The call of American toads is a sustained high-pitched trill call, whereas the call of the Fowler’s toad is a nasally “waaaaa”, almost sounding like an injured goat. American toads are explosive breeders, like many of our other early-rising amphibians, meaning adults gather during one short burst of reproductive effort. Males will attract potential mates using their loud calls. If all goes well, the male will jump on the female’s back and hold on, which is called amplexus. As the male grasps the female, she will lay thousands of eggs in long jelly-like strings, which the male will fertilize. After a few weeks, these eggs will hatch into teeny little toadlets!

Although these toads are considered of least concern for conservation because they are widespread and abundant, they are still affected by threats facing other amphibians like habitat loss and degradation, road mortality, disease, and climate change. When we preserve habitats, we can keep common species common so the next generation of herpetologists can fall in love with toads (and herpetology) just like we did!

Note: When out exploring nature, make sure to follow all local rules and minimize disturbance of wildlife. If handling toads, do not use bug spray (as amphibians can absorb it into their skin) and wash your hands afterwards (as they are mildly toxic). Also, see [PARC’s ethical herping guidelines](#) for more information.

Works Cited

Phillips, C. A., Crawford, J. A., & Kuhns, A. R. (2022). *Field guide to amphibians and reptiles of Illinois*. University of Illinois Press.

Image Description: Image one: a male American toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*) sitting in a wetland, vocalizing. The toad is facing the right of the photo with an extended vocal sac. Image two: strings of American toad eggs laid in a wetland. The eggs are laid in long, curled strings which has become a mass. Photos courtesy of Callie Klatt Golba.

Missouri’s Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Study and Prioritization Project Update

MoDOT is excited to announce the completion of [Missouri’s Wildlife-Vehicle Collision \(WVC\) Study and Prioritization Project](#). This study, conducted by HDR Engineering, Inc. and the Wildlife Connectivity Institute, identifies where wildlife-vehicle conflicts occur most often and outlines safety strategies like retrofitting fencing to existing wildlife friendly structures to reduce WVCs while keeping animals connected to their habitats.

Also launched alongside the study is the [Roadkill Observation and Data System \(ROaDS\)](#) app. This survey is a citizen science effort allowing the public to report roadkill, animals crossing the road, and animals within 100 yards of the roadway using a Survey123 form. Instructions on how to download and submit observations are located by going to the link. Reptiles and amphibians commonly cross roads to migrate to breeding or hibernation sites, so they are often hit by vehicles. Herps don’t result in reports to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, since hitting them doesn’t cause damage or injuries;

it's also difficult to see many herps on roads, so they're a lot easier to hit without realizing it. With the ROaDS survey, you can help fill data gaps by reports herps on or near roadways in Missouri!

Image description: Attendees of the 2025 Ohio/Pennsylvania Herpetology Symposium take a group photo on the stairs of the science center at the University of Dayton. Photo courtesy of Maggie Hantak.

Amphibian Week 2026

It's the most wonderful week of the year!! This year PARC is celebrating Amphibian Week **May 3-9!** To help spread the word about all of the awesome information being shared about amphibians, use the hashtag **#AmphibianWeek** on all of your posts!



Interested in hosting an event, but not quite sure where to start? Take a look at [PARC's Amphibian Week resource page](#) to find posters, video interviews with amphibian biologists, and more!

Image description: The text "Amphibian Week" in black letters with a green salamander sitting on top of "Amphibian" and a green frog sitting to the right of "week". Photo courtesy of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

Wild Turtle Week 2026

This is also the most wonderful week of the year! PARC is celebrating Wild Turtle Week **June 8-12!** This slow and steady movement is a collaborative initiative between PARC and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to "shell-e-brate" all things turtles!

If you want to get in on the fun and share information online, use the hashtag **#WildTurtleWeek!** This year we are celebrating the 50 States of Turtles, and PARC has designed an [ArcGIS Storymap](#) with more information!

There will be a different theme each day of the week including a celebration of what makes turtles special, what threats wild turtle populations face, the important roles of turtles in wild ecosystems, and more! Take a look at the [PARC Wild Turtle Week resource page](#) for more information!

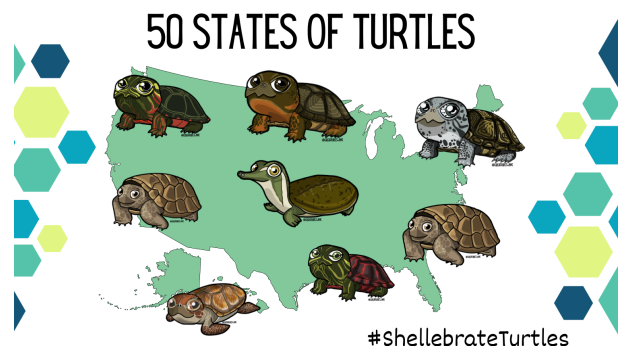


Image description: The text "50 states of turtles" is across the top of the image with the text "#ShellebrateTurtles" in the lower right-hand corner. The center of the image shows a green silhouette of the USA with 8 different turtle and tortoise species drawn on top. All of the turtles are drawn in a cartoonishly cute style and face the left side of the image. Green and blue hexagons line the sides of the image. Photo courtesy of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

PARC Disease Task Team Biosecurity Workshop at the Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease Conference

The PARC Disease Task Team is leading a biosecurity workshop at the upcoming Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease Conference! [Registration for this conference](#) ends April 30 for in-person attendance, and virtual registration ends May 15. After registering for GARD, you can sign up for the workshops [here](#).

The first half of the workshop will highlight research gaps in amphibian and reptile pathogen biosecurity guidelines and set priorities for research action. The second half of the workshop will focus on how best to promote and communicate practical biosecurity guidance to policy makers, practitioners, contractors, community scientists, the trade and pet keeping sectors, and the wider public. Insights gathered during the workshop will help us develop more impactful biosecurity guidelines with improved adoption of practical solutions across different audiences, thereby leading to enhanced disease prevention and management.

Photo Call!

Attention all photographers! Are your friends and family bored of seeing your field photos? We would love to see them! MWPARC is seeking photograph submissions of midwestern amphibians and reptiles for use in our outreach materials.



You can submit photos using the QR code or by visiting the [Google form](#). This one-stop-shop makes it easy to give us permission to use your images and to bulk upload photographs. Your submission will be directly linked to the images you upload so we can include all image credits for the photographs you provide when published.

Image Description: A black and white QR code that links to the google form to submit your images of midwestern amphibians and reptiles: <https://forms.gle/d4kQzEmLv3Z2kiG29>.

Advisory Board: Get to Know Them!

Emma Buckardt is a PhD student in Natural Resources, with an emphasis in Fisheries and Wildlife at the University of Missouri. She is interested in understanding how anthropogenic systems impact amphibians and reptiles to provide conservation and management actions for both common and rare species. Emma has previously worked in mined-lands and agricultural systems and is now exploring amphibian communities in urban systems for her dissertation research. She enjoys connecting the public to her work through environmental education and outreach. Her amphibian research and focus within the Midwest led Emma to join MWPARC during her master's degree in order to stay connected to herpetology conservation throughout the



midwest. She joined the advisory board for MWPARC this year (2026), to continue supporting the mission of MWPARC.

Image description: Emma Buckardt, MWPARC Advisory Board Member, smiling while holding a softshell turtle (*Apalone sp.*). Image courtesy of Emma Buckardt.

Stories From the Field

Monitoring wood frog breeding with Dr. Allison Sacerdot-Velat, the Curator of Biology and Herpetology and Vice President of Conservation Research at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. Dr. Sacerdot-Velat participated in and summarized Illinois wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*) surveys during spring 2026. The wood frog is an Illinois Species in Greatest Conservation Need. They have lost most of their historic habitat in the northern portion of the state, where they used mesic woodlands with temporary, fishless wetlands (also called ephemeral pools or vernal pools). Their wooded habitats were heavily fragmented by roads, and many of the historic ponds that supported them were drained during agricultural expansion, with the installation of agricultural drainage tile. While some amphibian species can coexist in more permanent wetlands with fish species, wood frogs cannot survive in wetlands with predatory fish species, and they are highly dependent on forest cover for carrying out their life cycle. This is why having comprehensive protection of all wetland types, whether they are permanent or ephemeral, is critical to preservation of our regional biodiversity.



Wood frogs lay their eggs communally, so the males tend to hang out near spots that already have eggs, and call to draw the females to the oviposition site. They will wrestle each other, and often form a ball of frogs trying to access the female, as their populations are typically male-skewed. By surveying for the egg masses, we get a count of reproductive females in the population, since they each produce one mass each season. Over time, we can use changes in the number of egg masses to track changes in the breeding population size. Each female wood frog produces a discrete mass of eggs that may contain between 140-1200 eggs, but typically in our sites, they produce 200-700 eggs. The number of eggs per mass increases with female body size. This year is the 12th consecutive season of their breeding since reintroduction.

The wood frogs that we study are populations that we reintroduced to their historic range in Lake County following intensive habitat restoration. The restoration involved removal of over 4000 lineal feet of agricultural drain tile that was 16 feet below the surface. Hundreds of acres of invasive buckthorn were removed, which outcompetes our native flora, and creates bare soil substrate rather than dense leaf litter, in the invaded woodlands. Buckthorn also absorbs more water from the soil than our native shrubs, further shortening the time that wood frogs have to complete their metamorphosis from tadpoles, and move onto land from their ephemeral pools. Additionally, buckthorn releases a compound called emodin into the environment that disrupts amphibian egg development, as well as serving as an allelopathic compound (one that inhibits other plant species from growing in a shared habitat patch). This compound is toxic to many

species of birds, mammals, and insects as well. Recent Chicago tree audits found that buckthorn is the most common tree species in the region, so that illustrates the scale of the challenge that restoration managers are dealing with regularly.

Stories From the Field Submission: Do you have a story to share? Submit your story [here!](#)

Image description: Two wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) in a wetland sitting on top of reeds. One frog is sitting slightly on top of the other frog. Both frogs are looking at the camera. Photo courtesy of Allison Sacerdote-Velat.

2026 Meetings and Conferences

Mark your calendars!

[Third Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease \(GARD\) Meeting](#) - June 8-12 in Knoxville, TN.

[Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists](#) - July 8-12 in New Orleans, LA.

[Ecological Society of America](#) - July 26-31 in Salt Lake City, UT.

[Wildlife Disease Association Conference](#) - July 26-31 in Chicago, IL.

[International Herpetological Symposium](#) - July 29-August 1 in Rodeo, NM.

[Southeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Annual Meeting](#) - September 17-20 in Black Mountain, NC.

Hot Off the Presses! - Recent Publications and Other News Scientific Journal Articles Featuring Herps in the Midwest

Temperature, Time, and Turtles: Staggs et. al., quantified wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*) habitat use from 2015-2016 in Minnesota. Using GPS and temperature data, the team determined that timing and temperature influenced wood turtle habitat use, with open canopy air temperature being the stronger predictor of habitat use. They also found sex-based differences in habitat use during the post-mating period with male wood turtles returning to the river at night and females moving further away from the river.

Staggs, Jena M., Brown, Donald J., Cochrane, Madaline M., Badje, Andrew F., and Moen, Ron A. Influences of temperature and time on habitat use patterns of a semi-aquatic turtle. *Ecology and Evolution*. 2025.

Home, sweet home ranges: Tamplin et. al., conducted a radiotelemetry study in Iowa on juvenile wood turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) for 32-182 weeks over a 10 year period. They also conducted a 6-week study on head-started hatchlings to determine home ranges and habitat use patterns of juveniles, to compare results to patterns of adults. They found that home ranges were significantly smaller for hatchlings compared to older juveniles, and that juveniles were generally located further from the river than hatchlings.

Tamplin, Jeffrey W., Otten, Joshua G., Berg, Samuel W., Patel, Nadia E., Tipton, Jacob B., and Radunzel, Justine M. R. Home range size and habitat usage of hatchling and juvenile wood turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) in Iowa. *Diversity*. 2025.

Want to see your research highlighted? Have you recently published on populations of amphibians or reptiles in the Midwest? We want to hear about it! Please reach out to **Liam Feeney** (ohioherping@gmail.com) and **Danielle Galvin** (dgalvin2@utk.edu) if you would like to highlight your research.

Header photo description: Two American toads (*Anaxyrus americanus*) in amplexus in a wetland. Both toads are facing the camera directly. Photo courtesy of Callie Klatt Golba.

We want your feedback: What would you like to see in future volumes of our newsletter? Give us more information by filling out this survey: <https://forms.gle/Hz9ZkznEFfiTE8a48>

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