

FISH CREEK PROVINCIAL PARK

Amphibians in the Park

Amphibians are older than the dinosaurs. In fact, they were the first group of vertebrates to boldly set out on land some 350 million years ago. All other land living vertebrates, from dinosaurs to humans, owe their existence to amphibians.

To help preserve healthy populations of amphibians we must care for both our terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

What can you do to help?

- Stay on designated trails in the park to avoid disturbing or destroying natural habitats, especially shoreline areas around the creek, river and ponds.
- Be sure that all garbage including pet waste goes into designated bins to avoid polluting the land or water.
- Ensure pets are leashed and under control at all times, keep pets out of the creek, ponds and other water bodies in the park.
- **Do not** attempt to catch or handle frogs, salamanders or tadpoles - these animals absorb air and water through their skin. Perspiration, oils, lotions, or insect repellent from our hands can be absorbed by these animals seriously harming or killing them.
- Report sightings of any amphibians to park staff.
- Contact the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society to participate in the Amphibian Monitoring Program.

What amphibians might I see in the Park?

Boreal Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris maculata*)

Alberta's smallest frog measures a mere 2 – 4 cm. It varies in colour from dark brown to green with three dark stripes or lines of broken spots on its back and a white upper lip. It is more often heard than seen and the males mating calls in spring are quite loud. Their trill is similar to the sound made by dragging a thumbnail over the teeth of a stiff plastic comb. Breeding occurs between April and June, with males calling as soon as ponds are ice-free.

This frog is widely distributed across the province and may be found in the vicinity of many types of water bodies. It feeds on insects and other invertebrates. It over winters by burrowing underground.



Boreal Chorus Frog

For more information contact:

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Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*)

This frog measures up to 6 cm in length. It is usually brownish overall with dark spots. It often has two light coloured dorsal stripes and sometimes a whitish vertebral stripe. The Wood Frog wears a dark brown or black mask from its snout through the eye to the base of the front legs. This mask is bordered on the bottom by a white stripe. Breeding begins as soon as ice starts to melt April to June. Males call while floating at the surface with a variety of high pitched snores and grunts. Wood frogs forage on land and in water feeding on a wide variety of invertebrates. Outside of the breeding season this frog spends most of its time on land.



Wood Frog

Wood frogs are distributed widely in Alberta except for southern grassland areas. They are found farther north than any other amphibian. The Wood Frog is the only amphibian to be found inside the arctic circle. This frog overwinters on land under leaf litter freezing completely solid. This is an adaptation to cold climates where cells are flooded with glucose to reduce dehydration and damage.

The **Tiger Salamander** (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) and **Northern Leopard Frog** (*Rana pipiens*) have historically been noted as occurring in the park. These amphibians are rarely found and it is not known for certain if they still reside in the Park.



Tiger Salamander

Tiger Salamanders may never have been numerous in the park and if they were- they would have been difficult to find as they spend a great deal of time hidden under leaf litter, rocks and logs.

As with other amphibians worldwide Northern Leopard Frog populations mysteriously crashed over much of their range through the 1970s and 1980s. Reasons for this are uncertain, but some factors include global warming, increased UV radiation from depleted ozone, habitat fragmentation and loss, as well as air and water pollution.



Northern Leopard Frog

Living with wildlife means respecting their space.

*Help do your part to ensure amphibians are always an important part of this ecosystem.
(Handling, harassing, or collection is prohibited.)*