

October 24, 2000

The field season has finally ended. We had our last site visit today. The frogs are mostly gone from the wetlands, and the few that are left will be hunkering down soon. Several of our sites are drier than we have ever seen them, so we're all hoping for some rain this fall and a good snow year this winter.

Leopard frogs, the species we study the most, spend the winter underwater resting on top of the sediment or burrowed in a little bit. They don't hibernate, but since they are cold-blooded, their metabolism slows way down. Some of our smaller sites will freeze all the way to the bottom, so the frogs have to move from these summer homes to larger bodies of water. You might see them crossing the roads in large numbers during an evening rain in the fall, but if it's a dry fall like this one has been, you're not as likely to catch a mass migration of frogs. The frogs will overwinter in these larger wetlands until springtime rolls around. The adult leopard frogs then head back to the smaller wetlands to lay their eggs. These wetlands will warm up faster and provide protection from predators such as fish that can't survive the winter in them. You'll hear the adult males calling in choruses throughout the spring. Different frogs call at different times, and each species has a unique sound. If you live near a wetland and hear frogs calling, you can find a recording of frog choruses over the winter or visit our web site at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/kids/frogsforkids.html> and learn the different calls. Then when spring rolls around, you can identify the frogs living in your area. It's the easiest way to figure out what's nearby, especially in some of the muckier wetlands.

We'll be at the wetlands in the spring, listening for calling frogs and trying to spot egg masses floating close to shore. Until then, though, it's time for us to hunker down for the cold weather, too! Have a good winter! And get out there and listen to the spring sounds of frogs next year!

- *MPCA Frog Crew*