

June 12, 2000

The field season is beginning to pick up. It's hard to believe it's already the middle of June! We have been out in the field since the end of April. At first, we were just listening for frogs calling at our main sites we survey every year.

You can tell we didn't get much snow this winter. The water level is down quite a bit at most of our sites. We even had one site we've been surveying since 1996 dry up completely! We also checked out a few new sites to see what kinds of frogs were present.

Since the last week of May, we have been visiting sites and doing larval surveys. We catch 30 tadpoles, usually leopard frog, but sometimes green and/or mink frog. We measure the body length and total length of each one. We then examine the development in hind limbs, etc., that has occurred and "stage" them according to a standard classification system.

Most of the leopard frog tadpoles we are catching now have hind limbs that are almost getting defined toes. The limbs are mostly just "paddles" right now with an indentation or two where digits will begin to form.

We have also been spending a short amount of time during each visit catching the adult and subadult frogs that have returned to the wetlands. We don't usually see malformations in them; it's mostly just to get a general sense of what species are there. It seems that malformed frogs may have reduced fitness and are often unable to survive the winter.

We'll continue with these activities at our main sites and check out some more new sites over the next month. Then, this year's metamorph frogs will begin appearing, and we'll kick it into high gear doing population surveys and documenting malformations. Until then!

- MPCA Frog Crew