



# FrogWatch USA Monitoring Protocols



## Data Collection

- **To register or inquire about a site**, please refer to the [FrogWatch Locations Web App](#) and email [frogwatch@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:frogwatch@montgomeryparks.org) with your interest and detailed information regarding its location. If a site location was provided by staff, take note of the site name(s) from your **permissions packet**.
- Plan to **monitor at least 30 minutes after sunset**. Monitoring activity should conclude by 1:00 a.m.
- Consider the temperature, precipitation, and wind conditions before visiting your site. Do not monitor if severe or **inappropriate weather** (freezing temperatures, hard rain, strong winds) occurs or is forecasted.
- **Upon arrival** for a monitoring visit, note any changes to your site and record them in the "Additional Notes" section of the [Observation Datasheet](#). Remember to respect the area and minimize any disturbance. Do NOT interact with wildlife.
- Record all **weather information** asked for on the Observation Datasheet including air temperature, wind speed (based on the [Beaufort Wind Scale](#)), current precipitation, and weather history.
- **Remain quiet for at least two (2) minutes** before collecting data so the frogs and toads acclimate to your presence.
- When you are ready, cup your hands around your ears and **listen for precisely three (3) minutes**.
- Remain quiet and still during the 3-minute data collection period. Frogs and toads may stop calling if you make noise.
- After 3 minutes, record:
  - **Start time** – The time you began your official listening observation
  - **End time** – The time you stopped (which should be **exactly 3 minutes from start time**)
  - **Each species** (full common name or "Unknown Gray Treefrog Species") you heard and can confidently identify.
  - The **call intensity** for each species (use the Call Intensity Index described on the datasheet)
  - **Additional information** gathered can be documented in the "Additional Notes" section of the datasheet.
- **NOTE:** If your listening is interrupted by a loud noise or disturbance (e.g. airplane, cell phone ringing):
  - **Restart the 2-minute acclimation period followed by the 3-minute data collection session**. Remember to change the start and end times on the datasheet.
  - If you experience constant interruptions at your listening site (e.g., metro cars running, continuous traffic noise), keep track of the time each disturbance occurs and record it in the "Additional Notes" section of the datasheet.

## Data Submission

- **Review data** in the field for completion and accuracy.
- **Submit data** online as soon as possible after each monitoring visit to the national database: <https://frogwatch.fieldscope.org>.
  - Alternatively, you may download and save a copy of the datasheet and enter data from a tablet or mobile device from <https://mygreenmontgomery.org/frogwatch>.
- **Log volunteer hours** at <https://montgomeryparks.org/support/volunteer>.
- **Direct any questions** to [frogwatch@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:frogwatch@montgomeryparks.org) or [frogwatch@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:frogwatch@montgomerycountymd.gov).

## Monitoring Equipment

Bring these materials with you to the field for safety and accuracy.

- **Cell phone.** Make sure it is charged and you have service at your wetland site. This is **important for your safety** and can also function as a timer for keeping track of acclimation and monitoring times and an audio recording device (optional to record calls for review/verification).
- **Flashlight or head lamp** (with extra batteries). Although your cell phone may act as a flashlight in a pinch, having a separate way to light the path to your site and view your surroundings is imperative.
- A **copy of the FrogWatch USA protocol** to reference (print this document or [reference online](#)).
- [FrogWatch USA Observation Datasheet\(s\)](#) for each monitoring observation you plan to complete (or a method for recording and entering required data in the field).
- **Something to write on** – a clipboard, binder, or piece of foam core – and a plastic bag to cover it during rain.
- **Something to write with** – a pencil or pen with indelible ink.
- **Thermometer** to measure ambient temperature (weather app on phone may be substituted, as needed).

## Safety Precautions

**Your safety is critical and of the utmost importance. Be aware of your surroundings at all times.** If at any time you feel uncomfortable or uneasy, stop monitoring and leave the site. Call the authorities if needed.

Some common-sense precautions include:

- Bring a **first aid kit**.
- **Wear protective clothing** (boots, pants, long sleeves) to combat biting insects and contact with poison ivy. **Keep a rain jacket** in your car and bring it to your site, when needed.
- Park in a safe **location** and be sure your car does not block traffic. **Display your parking placard**.
- **Become familiar with your monitoring site** by visiting during daylight hours and test whether your cell phone has reception while there.
- **Do not monitor in severe or inappropriate weather** and watch the weather so as not to go out if it is predicted.
- **Monitor with a partner or group.** If monitoring alone, let someone know where you are and when you intend to return.
- **Be aware of hazards** such as areas where you can slip or trip, poisonous plants, ticks, hornets, and other types of wildlife. Be mindful of where you are placing your hands and feet in particular.
- **Keep your permissions packet on you** when monitoring on Montgomery County Parkland. To contact Park Police, call 301-949-8010. In the event of an emergency, call 911.

## Reminders

- The FrogWatch USA season is **February through August** nationwide. Do not collect data outside of this time frame.
- This is a **nocturnal program** and data must be collected **at least 30 minutes after sunset**. Some frog and toad species call during the day, but volunteers must adhere to the standardized protocol for scientific trend analysis.
- **Do not report any species unless you are confident of the identification.** You may write down species you are not sure of in the “Additional Notes” section of the Observation Datasheet.
- You are to submit data on **field observations only**. You may take recordings on your phone or other device and ask a FrogWatch coordinator for identification assistance. However, you are not to add a species the datasheet that you did not recognize in the field. The recordings are to serve as a learning tool and verification of what was heard.
- You may **contact a Montgomery FrogWatch Coordinator** any time you have questions or need assistance by emailing [frogwatch@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:frogwatch@montgomeryparks.org) or [frogwatch@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:frogwatch@montgomerycountymd.gov).