

WHAT IS THE AMPHIBIAN CROSSING BRIGADE?

This Brigade was started to help the amphibians cross roads where there has been road kill observed in the past. These groups are sometimes called "Bucket Brigades". Volunteers will help the amphibians cross the road and keep count of the individuals. We will be keeping an email list of interested people, and when we think there will be a migration we will let you know and hopefully you'll be willing to come out on a rainy night and help us, the frogs, and the salamanders. You can certainly do your own Crossing Brigade if you know of any area, but be sure to review the **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS** listed below.

WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

This event is not easy to predict. In perfect conditions, the melting or melted snow, heavy evening rain and warm temperatures cue the frogs and salamander to move in one large wave. Other years they may move over a series of nights and could be stalled by a late snow event or cold snap. In our area, this usually occurs in March and April. In 2021 most of the movement was March 18-28. 2022 started with a fairly big movement on March 7. In 2024, we had one of the earliest movements starting on February 28th and then movement again on March 6th.

We will send out migration alerts to those who give us their emails, so be sure to sign up!

WHAT TO DO AT THE END?

Stay as long as you like, but the Site Coordinator will typically leave when the traffic dies down. Be sure to either turn in your counts before you leave, or better, email them to us. Please include the location your volunteered at. Especially if you find a salamander, try to figure out the closest house address for reporting. The Site Coordinator can help you with this. Think about other crossing areas you may know about and organize your own Brigade for next year!

For more information or to get on our email list, please contact us!

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Volunteers participating in this activity are required to sign a release form with full knowledge that the Towns of Acton and Littleton will not be liable to anyone for personal injuries or property damage.

Contact us for a waiver!

This Handbook was developed in coordination with the Littleton Conservation Trust and Littleton Trails. Information was adapted from the Harris Center for Environmental Education and the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center.



AMPHIBIAN CROSSING BRIGADE HANDBOOK

ACTON, BOXBOROUGH, & LITTLETON

Every March or April, usually when it is a rainy night and temperatures are over 40 degrees, amphibians like frogs and salamanders move to their breeding grounds (vernal pools). Many of these species can move more than 1,000 feet, and often encounter roads during their migration, leading to significant road kill. This movement typically occurs over several weeks, but is often referred to as the "Big Night" if there are suitable conditions for one very busy night.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

All you need to do is go out to a crossing area, help the amphibians across the road, and keep track of what you see (keeping a tally of # of each species in your phone notes app works well). Please **PARK AWAY/BEFORE** the vernal pool area. There are a few locations across the 3 towns:

1. Oak Hill Rd (Littleton)
2. Fort Pond Rd (Acton/Littleton)
3. Arlington St (Acton)
4. Depot Rd (Boxborough)

[FIND MAPS HERE!](https://www.littletonma.org/1029/vernal-pools)

[HTTPS://WWW.LITTLETONMA.ORG/1029/VERNAL-POOLS](https://www.littletonma.org/1029/vernal-pools)

You will walk up and down the road, using your flashlight to find frogs and salamanders that need help. Sweep your flashlight in front of you from side to side, and pay attention to where your feet are about to be put down. Don't walk off the shoulder, as the frogs and salamanders are very hard to see as soon as they get off the pavement.

Please park on roads adjacent to locations above or park at the beginning of intersections with the roads above.



photo: Tim Garcea

HELPFUL TIPS!

- Learn about local species: Familiarize yourself with species you may encounter, use your phone camera to try and identify species
- Handle with care: Avoid picking up salamanders by their tails. Handle animals gently.
- Guide animals across: If you can't catch a fast frog or prefer not to pick them up, guide them safely across the road.
- Take pictures: Capture images of the animals you see, and practice your salamander grin!
- Move animals safely: If you pick up a frog or salamander, move them to the roadside, ensuring they are headed in the same direction they were going. Never toss an animal!
- Use a bucket: For busy nights, use a clean bucket (no soap or chemicals) to carry animals, rinsed with rainwater if possible.
- Avoid toxins: Make sure your hands are free from insect repellent, lotion, soap, perfume, or sanitizer, as animals can absorb toxins through their skin.
- Identify casualties: If you encounter dead animals, identify them at least as "frog" or "salamander." And keep a tally
- Final count: The Site Coordinator will perform a final count of roadkill in the evening.

WOOD FROG



WHAT DO I BRING?

You will be out on a dark rainy night, so be prepared for the weather! Wear raingear (preferably light colored) and warm clothes. Umbrellas can be good, but make it hard to catch something. A bright flashlight or headlamp (or both) is critical, and a safety vest is a must. We will have some safety vests with us, but if you have your own, please bring it. If you have blinking lights (like for a bicycle), those are great for safety. You may also want to bring the Little Guide to Salamanders and Frogs and something to record your amphibian counts. Other items you might want is your camera or phone, drinking water, clipboard, waterproof pens or pencils, a clean bucket, spatula, extra batteries or snacks.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

When you arrive, please check in with the Site Coordinator, if there is one. Carpool if you can, park as far off the road as you can, and avoid driving through the crossing area! We will hopefully identify the crossing areas ahead of time so you know where to park. Wear your reflective vest and have your flashlight or headlamp on at all times. **Stay alert** to traffic, and step out of the road when a car is coming. **Do not try to stop the car or run in front of it to save an animal.** Kids are absolutely welcome and their keen eyes are invaluable, but you need to be with them at all times. The Site Coordinator cannot watch or be responsible for the kids.