

# Conservation Corner

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Thanks to everyone who helped make the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual MG Garden Extravaganza a success! It's always fun to see new plants and old friends. We hope everyone who stopped by our Make & Take table will soon be working in their gardens while listening to their garden chimes, one of the many sights and sounds announcing the arrival of spring.

The air is warmer, the water is warmer, the days are longer, and the frogs are calling! Two of my favorites sounds of this season of rebirth and change are the songs of the first returning red-winged blackbirds and the calls of the first thawing chorus frogs. It's hard to believe that just a few frogs only an inch long can make so much noise. Soon other wood frogs along with spring peepers will join the chorus as each male stakes out his territory and calls for a mate.

Iowa is home to 16 species of frogs. Here in Pocahontas County, bull frogs, gray treefrogs, northern leopard, western chorus, and cricket frogs, as well as American toads may be found. Each species, of course, has its own beck and call. And while most of us associate the trills or clicks of frogs with springtime, many frogs and toads sing throughout the summer months.

Perhaps you've heard of the alarming decline in both numbers and health of our amphibians. Since settlement, Iowa has lost more than 95 percent of its original wetlands and 70 percent of its forests. As with many native species, loss of habitat is the most serious threat facing amphibians today. Fewer and more isolated wetlands and forests support fewer adults and provide less breeding and larval habitat and wintering sites. Unlike birds and large mammals, it's difficult for frogs and salamanders to travel to new areas. The trend has turned upward for monarch butterflies, hopefully amphibian populations will rebound as well.

Last week I read the following poem to the pre-schoolers. I hope you enjoy it, too.

"Listen for Me" by Joyce Sidman

from the Caldecott Honor Book *Song of the Water Boatman & Other Pond Songs*

Listen for me on a spring night,  
on a wet night,  
on a rainy night.  
Listen for me on a still night,  
for in the night, I sing.

That is when my heart thaws,  
my skin thaws,  
my hunger thaws.  
That is when the world thaws,  
and the air begins to ring.

I creep up from the cold pond,  
the ice pond,  
the winter pond.  
I creep up from the chill pond,  
to breathe the warming air.

I cling to the green reeds,  
the damp reeds,  
the muddy reeds.  
I cling to the slim reeds;  
my brothers are everywhere.



My throat swells with spring love,  
with rain love,  
with water love.  
My throat swells with peeper love;  
my song is high and sweet.

Listen for me on a spring night,  
on a wet night,  
on a rainy night.  
Listen for me tonight, tonight,  
and I'll sing you to sleep.