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*Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program: Making Connections Across Our Watershed*

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## **Volunteer Description**

### **Title: Ozaukee County Wildlife Survey Volunteer**

During 2009 and 2010, the Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department was awarded funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the US Environmental Protection Agency to develop, refine, and implement a “Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program” (Program). The Program reconnects existing, high quality habitat in Milwaukee River tributaries to Lake Michigan, the Milwaukee Estuary, and lower reaches of the main stem Milwaukee River. It also forges new connections between Ozaukee, Milwaukee, and other counties, municipalities, businesses, schools, NGO’s, citizens, volunteers, and state and federal agencies.

The Program is refining a GIS-based fish and wildlife tool to aid in the prioritization of high quality or potentially restorable wetland habitat sites and to direct on-the-ground restoration activities.

Volunteers are needed to provide wildlife occurrence data throughout the Milwaukee River Watershed portion of Ozaukee County to facilitate this effort. Depending on experience level, volunteers can choose to perform surveys for frog calling, salamanders, snakes, or breeding birds, or perform simple visual surveys documenting all wildlife species observed. Volunteers will have the choice of performing these surveys in any area ranging from their immediate surroundings to more distant ponds, wetlands, woodlands, etc.

**Responsibilities:** Wildlife surveys will take place throughout the spring and summer of 2011 within the Milwaukee River Watershed portion of Ozaukee County. All observations locations should be noted with geographic coordinates (gps not provided) or on a detailed map. Observations will be submitted to the contact listed below on a weekly basis. Available wildlife surveys include:

#### Frog Calling Surveys

Surveys are usually performed just after dark. Volunteers must learn to identify the frog calls (about 10 species) by taking an online quiz (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/frogquiz/>). Observers simply record dates and precise locations (GPS coordinates or map location) for every frog species heard or seen between March 15 and July 15. These can be slow driving surveys, with frequent stops where frogs are heard (drive safe!). Calling night birds can be reported too.

**Equipment needs:** GPS unit or detailed maps, frog call CD, flashlight, notebook, pencil, appropriate clothing, bug spray or bug shirt (optional), night bird call CD (optional).

#### Salamander Surveys

Volunteers can use minnow traps in small temporary ponds to capture salamanders while breeding, or simply search in and around ponds for eggs and adults. Traps can be checked any time of day, but must be checked every day while set. Trapping or searching should start in late March, after the first warm rain following ice out. Trapping should coincide with rain events and continue through April. Egg searches typically end in mid-May when eggs begin to hatch. Observers simply record dates and precise locations (GPS coordinates or map location) for every species found (by any means), with digital photographs of each species also recommended. Visit the Wisconsin Salamander Survey for further

instructions (<http://stcroixwildlife.org/salamander.htm>), or sign up with them and share your data. Landowner permission is required.

*Equipment needs:* GPS unit or detailed maps, amphibian field guide, amphibian egg field guide, waders, appropriate clothing, polarized sunglasses (fishing glasses with light lenses improve visibility in the water), digital camera (optional), notebook, pencil, partner (strongly recommended if working in water).

### Snake Surveys

These surveys use boards to attract snakes, or simply report observations of any snakes encountered. Observers tip boards up to find snakes for identification. Boards should be checked in the evening for best results, between May 1 and July 15. Help can be provided to locate good habitat to place boards into. Observers simply record dates and precise locations (GPS coordinates or map location) for every species found (by any means), with digital photographs of each species also recommended. Landowner permission is required.

*Equipment needs:* GPS unit or detailed maps, snake field guide, notebook, pencil, digital camera (optional), appropriate clothing, partner (recommended), bug spray or bug shirt (recommended).

### Visual and Fish Surveys

Simply record every critter heard or observed while outdoors with dates and precise locations (GPS coordinates or map location) for each observation, and submit digital photographs where possible. Animals typically recorded include turtles (usually sunning on logs and shorelines), snakes, frogs, spawning fish, and various mammals and birds. Fish caught can be reported, and dip nets or minnow traps used in riffle areas to look for small non-game fishes by lifting rocks. A fishing license is required to catch or trap fish and DNR regulations must be followed.

*Equipment needs:* GPS unit or detailed maps, field guides, notebook, pencil, appropriate clothing, dip nets, fishing gear, digital camera (recommended), binoculars (recommended).

### Breeding Bird Surveys (June only)

Birders must be able to identify local breeding birds by songs and calls. Simply record every bird heard or observed with dates and precise locations (GPS coordinates or map location) for each observation. These are typically early morning surveys. For this project we do not require participants to follow any formal protocol - simply record as many bird locations as possible in June.

*Equipment needs:* GPS unit or detailed maps, bird field guide, binoculars, notebook, pencils, appropriate clothing, bug spray or bug shirt (optional), song guides (CDs, tapes, iPhone/iPod/iTouch apps).

**Qualifications:** Detailed training for these survey methods is not currently available. Therefore, volunteers with applicable experience in the surveys listed above are encouraged to apply. Observers performing similar monitoring for other programs are strongly encouraged to submit their observations to this survey as well. Volunteers must have the capacity to submit their observations by email, phone, or mail on a weekly basis to the contact listed below.

**Contact:** If you are interested in participating in this unique, grassroots effort to document and protect the wildlife and habitat throughout Ozaukee County, please contact:

*Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department*

*Fish Passage Program*

*Volunteer Wildlife Survey*

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