



BCT Stewardship Journal: March 2025

Wood Frogs: Nature's Chilly Superheroes

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Native to the vernal pools etched into Cape Cod's unique landscapes, wood frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) have a miraculous ability: freezing themselves! Wood frogs can freeze up to 70% of their body using natural antifreeze components in their blood. This stops their breathing, heartbeat, and movement until the weather begins to warm up in the spring.

Wood frogs are the only frog species that can live beyond the Arctic Circle; however, many populations enjoy the milder climates of northeastern America. With yellowish-white bellies and a light upper stripe on their lips, wood frogs can be brown, green, gray, red and more! Females tend to be larger and more brightly colored than their male counterparts, and both sport unwebbed front feet. The most distinctive physical characteristic of wood frogs is a dark black band around their eyes, which makes them look like an amphibian Zorro. This must work for the ladies, as they migrate to vernal pools for breeding, laying masses of 1,000-3,000 eggs as early as March! Eggs take between 9 and 30 days to mature, and tadpoles reach maturity at 1-2 years of age. Like humans, and unlike many of their amphibian counterparts, Wood Frogs can recognize their tadpole siblings when surrounded by thousands of other individuals.

Apart from the incredible feat of being able to successfully freeze AND thaw each year, Wood Frogs are a great example of understanding the impact climate change has on animal communities around us. This species amazingly continues to adjust their thawing times (and, consequently, mating times) as air temperature trends change. This ability is a great example of how exceptional animals can be in adapting to rapid changes in our climate.

In the springtime, consider visiting BCT's Vernal Pool Trail behind Eddy Elementary – this trail is open to the public outside of school hours, so be sure to check before adventuring! Enjoy the new buds and the light green leaves popping out above this spring as you sit and listen for the Wood Frog's telltale "clucking" call in the forest amphitheater



Adult Wood Frog. Note black/brown mask across eyes.



Example of a frozen Wood Frog during winter hibernation.