



## Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position Description

**Title:** Midewin Frog Monitor

**Purpose:** Ecological monitors play a vital role in monitoring various species and habitats throughout restored and remnant habitats at Midewin. The data collected by monitors is used to evaluate management needs and effectiveness, resulting in better ecological management practices. Frog monitors help directly with part one of our mission to conserve, restore, and enhance the native populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants.

**Duties and Responsibilities:** Monitors are responsible for their own transportation. Designated wetland sites will be assigned and monitors will be asked to survey 3 sites, at minimum, 3-5 times during the mating season (mid March-late July) in order to collect data for this presence/absence type of survey. Monitors will record all frog species they recognize by their distinctive mating calls. Recording mating calls may be helpful for later identification. Water and air temperature are also recorded. Data and volunteer hours must be entered online *after each individual survey*. Materials borrowed from Midewin, such as books, gate keys, vehicle placards and thermometers must be returned to the volunteer coordinator at the end of monitoring season.

**Department and Location:** Under the direction of Midewin's Ecologist, volunteer time and data is contributed to Midewin's Restoration Team. Assigned wetland monitoring sites may be anywhere within Midewin's property.

**Qualifications:** Monitors must have a good sense of hearing and able to safely navigate on foot at night. Monitors must be willing to learn and recognize 8 mating calls. Frogs and toads are most active at night, so monitors should be available between sundown and 10pm. Most sites require walking over uneven terrain with low visibility. Working with a partner or small group is required. **Monitors must have access to a computer to enter their data and volunteer hours online within 48 hours of each survey.**

**Time Commitment:** Monitors gain more experience every year and therefore data gets more thorough and accurate, so a multiple year commitment is preferred but not required. Surveys take place between sundown and 10pm, however scouting the sites in daylight hours is highly recommended. Monitors are asked to survey their 3 assigned sites, at minimum, 3-5 times over the mating season (mid March-late July). These surveys should be spread over the full season. Each surveyed site requires 10 minutes of recording time plus time for proper water and air temperature readings. Monitors seem to spend 1-2 hours each visit depending on the location of their sites.

**Training:** All monitors are required to complete Midewin's in-house orientation that will cover updates, safety, protocols and signing out materials/gate keys. This usually takes place in early March, meeting at the Welcome Center. Additional responsibilities could become applicable or available to this position in the future that might require additional training and/or certification. These additional responsibilities will be determined by the program managers and offered to selected volunteers. New monitors will be partnered with an experienced monitor for the first season. New monitors need to keep in mind they will be coordinating schedules with their experienced partner(s).

Each monitor will be given a CD with local frog mating calls to study. Smart phone Apps are also available such as the Audubon Reptile and Amphibian Guide with information and recorded mating calls. Resources and maps are available on Midewin's frog monitor webpage at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/midewin/workingtogether/volunteering/?cid=stelprdb5355893>. Another good website resource is on the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum website at <http://frogsurvey.org>.

**Working Conditions/Physical Effort:** *Monitors are covered by the Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) while performing duties described by this position description during the season(s) listed or scheduled shifts.* Monitors are also covered while scouting their sites during daylight hours. Monitors must read, sign and consent to the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes emergency plans, safety requirements and recommended best practices. Monitors may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions & allergens
- Working after dark with low visibility
- Walking on uneven, possibly wet terrain and/or through tall vegetation and near standing water
- May be working near hazardous plants or insects as well as wildlife

**Benefits:** Frog monitors have the unique experience to witness Midewin's nightlife. Volunteer monitors further the citizen scientist movement by contributing valuable data. Monitors can observe long-term progress towards the ecological restoration. Midewin's volunteer staff receives ongoing recognition from their supervisor and other staff. Volunteers that contribute three or more individual volunteer visits in the fiscal year will receive an invitation to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or U.S. Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteer commitments.

**Related Opportunity:** Lead Frog Monitors have additional responsibilities that can include leading communication throughout the season, announcing position related off-site training opportunities or presentations, training new monitors, organizing data and/or writing short articles.