HABITAT MANAGEMENT FOR AMPHIBIANS

Amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders, newts and caecilians) require both aquatic and terrestrial habitats for their survival. Amphibians lay their eggs in water and the larvae mature in the water until metamorphosis into a juvenile or adult. Other than the breeding season, most adults and juveniles live on land. Amphibians have permeable skin (water and air passes through it) which requires damp or humid conditions to maintain their permeability.

The basic requirements for amphibian habitats are:

- Healthy, accessible water (streams, ponds, etc.) for breeding, egg production and larvae development
- Shelter for protection from heat, dryness and predators
- Foraging areas with sufficient populations of food species
- Hibernation sites

Habitat management for amphibians should offer:

- Ponds with sun exposure, of suitable depth and with aquatic vegetation
- Unpolluted water
- Open areas to allow sunlight to reach ground level
- Areas for hibernation

Habitat management should avoid:

- Adding fish to ponds used by amphibians
- Making the ponds available to large numbers of waterfowl
- Using chemicals in the surrounding area as much as possible
- Capturing amphibians for pets

Urban and suburban gardens and open public and private areas provide habitats for many species of amphibians. Environments such as school grounds can provide valuable habitats for amphibians – especially frogs, toads and newts. Garden ponds provide opportunities to assist in the conservation and protection of amphibians.

One-third to one-half of the world's amphibian species could possibly go extinct in our lifetime – making it the largest mass extinction since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. About 122 amphibian species are believed to have become extinct since 1980.

As amphibians are the first species to be affected by unhealthy environmental issues, they are the harbingers of negative ecological changes. They serve as a warning system for other species including humans.

With increased awareness and implementation of improved habitat management for amphibians, we will become better stewards of planet earth while conserving and protecting our number one bio-indicators of the health and welfare of our ecosystems.

By educating others on the heightened threat to our amphibians, by identifying and utilizing good management of amphibian habitats, and by finding ways to publicize the problems and possible solutions for the challenges to our amphibian populations – we can make a difference in our world.

Source: arc-trust.org