

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Nonprofit Asks Citizens to Help Create “Snapshot” of Amphibian Breeding Times**

NORTH AMERICA – A Georgia-headquartered nonprofit is asking for help to gather information on the timing of Wood Frog and Spotted Salamander breeding throughout the respective ranges of these species. The Orianne Society, a science-based group that focuses on the conservation of reptiles and amphibians and their habitat launched the citizen science centered project “Snapshots in Time” in early 2014.

“Scientists recognize that many species are changing their yearly patterns because of changes in climate,” says Dr. Stephen Spear, Associate Conservation Scientist with The Orianne Society. “However, scientists can’t be everywhere at once to monitor these changes – but Citizen Scientists can. Through them, this project will help us figure out if these changes are occurring with two widespread amphibians, and what that means for their ability to continue to survive and reproduce under changing conditions.”

But why is this information important? According to Dr. Spear, pinpointing locations where the timing of breeding is changing due to climate change could someday help protect these species, as well as others. “If we discover that these two amphibians are not reproducing successfully due to faster pond drying times, we can look at ways to improve these wetlands to maintain habitat for not only our focal species, but the rarer amphibians that occur there as well,” says Spear.

What Dr. Spear is describing is using private citizens from all walks of life to complete what is commonly referred to as a “phenology” research project. Phenology, by definition, is the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena, especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life. What Dr. Spear and The Orianne Society are trying to accomplish is to determine changes that may be occurring in the timing of breeding for the Wood Frog and Spotted Salamander.

Dirk Stevenson, Assistant Conservation Scientist with The Orianne Society relates “Encountering Wood Frogs and Spotted Salamanders or evidence of these species in the field is always exciting. Rolling a pond-side log to see the bright orange spots of a plump Spotted Salamander, or hearing the duck-like chuckling sounds of a sizeable Wood Frog chorus, are always memorable natural history experiences.”

Both of these amphibians breed following heavy rains during winter–spring that flood woodland depressions and various other types of short-lived, “wet-weather” ponds that lack fish. The Orianne Society hopes to recruit citizens to monitor these areas and report when they observe signs of Wood Frog or Spotted Salamander breeding.

While scientists are encouraged to submit observation data, The Orianne Society hopes to entice people of all ages and backgrounds to participate, not just those that are enthusiastic about reptiles and amphibians, but everyone who enjoys the outdoors and wants to learn more about the ecology of these species. With this study, you can make your observations count toward a scientific review of these species’ breeding patterns. This will benefit our knowledge of these animals, and also provide you an opportunity to better acquaint yourself with the amphibian life in your own backyard.

To learn more about this project, log on to [www.oriannesociety.org](http://www.oriannesociety.org), and download datasheets, range maps for the species and species identification guides so that you can participate and provide valuable data for your region!

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