



## Nature's Hip Hop

By: *Natalie Dubiel, Naturalist*

While they are hip musicians and they do hop, they are probably not what you think of when you hear Hip Hop. This time of year, naturalists, park professionals, and volunteers are out in the parks listening for these hip little hoppers – frogs and toads! While the frogs are leapers, and toads are the hoppers, all frogs have the opportunity to be the stars of the show, taking center stage in nature after dark. These free concerts can range from gentle notes to a full cacophony of sound, and no two shows are ever completely identical. From February or March through August, the style and volume of calls will shift, ebbing and flowing with the weather and the frogs who are headlining for the evening.



Frogs and toads are small animals. The largest frogs found in this area will still fit in your hand while the smallest will fit on your thumb. Small animals have an easier time hiding from predators. Living in concealed environments and being well camouflaged allows frogs to seamlessly disappear into rocks, water, and plants. The ability to effectively disappear into an environment makes calls important clues not just for identifying but also finding frogs and toads. The importance of these calls applies not only to humans listening but also to other frogs.

While some of us will simply happen upon these free concerts, some will intentionally venture out after dark to listen to the show. These folks aren't just out there to enjoy nature's Hip Hop, they're actually out there to study it! FrogWatch USA is a citizen science project managed by Akron Zoo that Medina County Park District uses to study the frogs and toads within our parks. Trained volunteers venture out after dark when the weather is sufficiently mild to appropriate habitats to listen for the calls of frogs and toads during peak breeding season. The project requires listening to and identifying the species calling and determining how intensely they are calling. This can indicate things like species abundance and how breeding is progressing within the habitat being observed. In 2024, Medina County Park District volunteers collected data at 37 different stations throughout the parks. At those stations, ten different species of frogs were documented. This accounts for nearly all of the frogs that could be seen in this area.

On the next warm spring evening, venture out and listen in nearly any wet habitat. While wetlands, pools, and ponds may seem preferable, even a city drainage ditch will do for these hip little hoppers. Will you hear the solo *peep* of a spring peeper, a chorus of *prrrreeeeep* calls from the western chorus frogs, or, perhaps, the *glunk* of a green frog that is just warming up? No matter what you hear, we hope you enjoy the show. You can learn more about FrogWatch by visiting the Akron Zoo website at <https://www.akronzoo.org/frogwatch/>!

Celebrate Medina County Park District's 60th anniversary by taking part in the Park Perks Challenge! This is a self-guided adventure where you will need to successfully complete challenges to collect perk points to earn park prizes! Challenge yourself across three categories: *Research It*, *Seek and Find*, and *See You There*, all designed to help you explore and learn about Medina County parks.

Prizes will be awarded at four different levels based on the number of park perk points achieved. The more points you collect, the more prizes you'll get! Prize value increases with point values.

The challenge officially began on April 19 and runs through October 4. Download the form at [www.medinacountyparks.com](http://www.medinacountyparks.com). Hard copies are available at the nature centers or park headquarters.



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**Fishing poles and bobbers**  
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*Thank You*