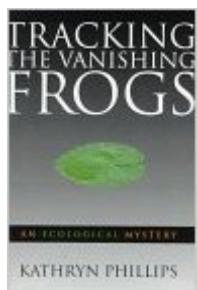


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# Tracking The Vanishing Frogs: An Ecological Mystery



## **Synopsis**

In 1990, when a group of scientists sounded an unusual alarm about the declining number of frogs in the world, journalist Kathryn Phillips heard their call and followed them as they sought out the reasons for this intriguing situation. Here she provides an in-depth report of this fascinating investigation. Photos.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1990, a group of scientists met to discuss the disappearance or decline of amphibians, particularly frogs and toads. Though they could not agree on how to proceed, some field biologists pursued the matter independently. Enter journalist Phillips, who would follow the story for the next three years, interviewing scientists and accompanying them on field trips to search for frogs. She has written an engrossing account of attempts to solve the mystery. Primary causes of the amphibian decline appear to be acid rain, ultraviolet radiation and drought. Other causes are habitat destruction by over-grazing and logging, off-road vehicles, dams and introduction of nonnative, predatory fish. This important study details yet another environmental problem. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is an unintentional companion volume to Mark Jaffe's account of the decimation of Guam's bird population, *And No Birds Sing*. The endangered creatures Phillips is concerned with are amphibians, a far less sexy group than, say, wolves or eagles. Frogs and toads are hardly majestic,

or even huggable; they're slimy, warty, and, to some, even repulsive, but they've been around for 350 million years and are an integral part of many ecosystems. Amphibians are also extremely vulnerable to environmental change, so vulnerable, in fact, that they are now considered to be "bioindicators," like canaries in a mine. And they're disappearing from the wetlands and woods of California, Louisiana, Florida, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Australia, France, and India. Phillips accompanies a number of herpetologists in the field as they try to identify the causes of this alarming decline. Along the way, she acquaints us with frog life, the ecological and scientific value of frogs, and the disturbing realities of the unregulated international frog trade (for food or pets). All evidence and hypotheses point to human activity as the culprit, specifically water and air pollution, and the corresponding rapid changes in the world's weather patterns. Informative, engaging, and enraging. Donna Seaman

Purchased for school class and the teacher wanted it after they were done (we were going to donate it to the class anyway for future students who couldn't afford it). It was in excellent shape and better than the teacher's copy. It is now the teaching copy for that class and the teacher's old copy is available for future students to borrow.

Ring this book for school. So far it's a pretty good book. More interesting than I thought it would be.

Terrible book unless you like learning about research I only had to get it because of class and it's a waste of fifteen bucks but if you like to learn about research learn about frogs then get it

Fine. But I didn't use it.

Great shipping and loved the book.

Good

This book reports on scientists' efforts to discover why populations of many frogs have seemingly gone into a steep decline over the last 50 years. Phillips is a science journalist from California. In this book, she describes interviews and interactions she had with some scientists seeking to uncover the reasons for declining frog populations, especially in California and Costa Rica. She observes and assists some leading herpetologists in the field as they gather data about frog

populations. She also discusses their research findings, in which a variety of environmental changes ranging from habitat loss to the ozone hole to climate change all seem to be playing a role in stressing many frog populations to the point of extinction. The book includes a set of color plates showing many of the frogs discussed in the text, and a long bibliography for those interested in further reading. I found the book quite compelling. Although it was written over 15 years ago now, the research that Phillips reports in the text still isn't widely known outside the small world of frog specialists. This is a highly informative book and a great place to begin understanding the stresses of the modern world on frog populations.

This is a fascinating and gripping tale about an animal that is simple, slimy, and generally not well thought of by humans. Our desensitivity to the legitimate role in our world of reptiles and amphibians (from the bible to the Sound of Music) has left them without an advocate when they need it most. Kathryn Phillips explains why their loss is anything but insignificant. In the old days, coal miners would take a canary into the mines with them and listen to it sing all day. If the canary stopped singing and fell over dead, the miners didn't stop to wonder why or grieve its passing, they got the heck out of the mine as fast as they could. That was the very reason they took the canary in with them. Frogs are the canaries on this earth. But here on earth, we don't have the easy option of just getting the heck out of here as fast as we can. Kathryn Phillips tells you why with the power of a fiction writer but does it as only a professional journalist could with clarity, accuracy and completeness.

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