

Nogies Creek

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Conversational rather than mournful, not too fast (♩=135)

My name is Ed-win Cross-man, and I'm an e-co-lo-gist.
I'm stu-dy-ing the bull-frog now; I al-so stu-dy fish.
My group works down at No-gies Creek in east On-ta-ri-o.
We make ex-ten-sive mea-sure-ments to see the spe-cies grow.
We mea-sure tad-poles, note their weight, and es-ti-mate their age.
We want to know how ma-n-y pass through each im-por-tant stage.
But there are few sta-tis-tics in these facts which I now speak:
What hap-pened on the boo-ming ground last year at No-gies Creek.
Tell me, why does the bull-frog be-gin to go cour-ting?
Is it some-thing in the wa-ter? Is it some-thing in the sky?
Is it day-light get-ting lon-ger? Ri-ver cur-rent gro-wing stron-ger?
Do not ask me: I'm the ex-pert, but I can-not tell you why.

Complete lyrics overleaf

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My name is Edwin Crossman, and I'm an ecologist.
I'm studying the bullfrog now; I also study fish.
My group works down at Nogies Creek in east Ontario.
We make extensive measurements to see the species grow.
We measure tadpoles, note their weight, and estimate their age.
We want to know how many pass through each important stage.
But there are few statistics in these facts which I now speak:
What happened on the booming ground last year at Nogies Creek.

Tell me, why does the bullfrog begin to go courting?
Is it something in the water? Is it something in the sky?
Is it daylight getting longer? River current growing stronger?
Do not ask me: I'm the expert, but I cannot tell you why.

Some things we learn by measurement; some things we learn by chance.
We've learned that water lily pads are not their favourite plants.
The bullfrog is too heavy for a perch upon their leaf:
He'd rather something bushier that's stronger down beneath.
He'll set his feet upon the stems as wind and wave go by
To catch the food that comes to him, the beetle and the fly.
And when the heat of summer comes, each cottage owner wants
His fifty feet of waterfront kept free of tangled plants.

Each spring throughout the province in the rivers and the ponds,
Each male cries his greeting out; each female responds.
To us it is a message that the springtime does arrive,
For them it has the meaning that the species will survive.
At Nogies Creek we see them meet in shallows by the shore.
They gather by the hundreds now; there once were many more.
We've named their place of gathering; it's nothing too profound.
It's taken from the sound they make and called the "booming ground".

Last spring we went to Nogies Creek in time to see the mate.
The sound of males booming let us know we weren't too late.
We set out with our dip nets and our cameras and our pails,
To take our yearly census, and discovered only males.
We spent some days in listening: the sound brought no delight,
To hear that male chorus crying out into the night.
And when their time had ended, and the earth had lost their sound,
We saw the females swimming out to fill the booming ground.

What caused this lack of synchrony? Which sex is wrong, which right?
Do males follow temperature? Do females follow light?
Is this some fault in nature's plan? Unlikely that does seem.
Is this a batch of chemicals that someone dumped upstream?
A scientist knows causes and effects recur again:
Those things that happen once we find much harder to explain.
It may not be good science, but I've not the heart to seek
Another instance of last year's events at Nogies Creek.

Based on a lecture given by Dr. Edwin Crossman of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, at the 1979 annual meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. Nogies Creek (no apostrophe) is located about 130 miles northeast of Toronto.