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# Tens of thousands of baby toads to cross Chilliwack roads

By Evan Duggan, Vancouver Sun August 5, 2011 10:02 AM

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**METRO VANCOUVER** - Tens of thousands of pebble-sized creatures are flooding across a pair of Chilliwack roads today.

Tiny toadlets, no larger than a thumbnail, are migrating from their wetland origins near Ryder Lake, to the surrounding forest.

It's a dangerous journey for a threatened species, said Lisa Fox, of the Fraser Valley Conservancy — an organization that acquires and protects ecologically sensitive lands.

The baby Western Toads won't be making their migration on their own. The FVC, with the help of city officials, has been on hand throughout the week-long migration to control traffic and maintain a safe route for the expected 800,000 baby amphibians that will cross Ryder Lake and Elk View Roads.

The flow of toadlets across the road could peak today, Fox said in an interview.

The main problem facing the Western Toad is "fragmented habitat," and "impacts" on the road, she said. Only one per cent of these young toads will reach adulthood, Fox said, adding that toadlet road-crossings are common at this time of year throughout all

of B.C.

"When they're frightened they roll over or they freeze," Fox said. "We don't want to see them squished on the road."

A female can have as many as 16,000 eggs, and the babies grow according to the temperature, she said.

By the time the babies sprout front and back legs, they're ready for the overland journey to the woods, Fox said.

Soon after the toadlets leave the water their tails "absorb" back into their bodies, she added.

Each toadlet's crossing can take about five minutes. At any given point during the day, 30 per cent of the road crossing section could be covered in toads, she said.

The Fraser Valley Conservancy, with the help of the City of Chilliwack and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, is requesting that only local traffic attempt to use the circuitous route that links Ryder Lake Road, Huston Road and Elk View Road, which surround the wet land.

Instead of coming to see the toadlets, those interested in helping can donate a "toonie for a toad" online at [www.fraservalleyconservancy.ca](http://www.fraservalleyconservancy.ca).

Fox said the organization is saving up for open-topped toad tunnels, which can be laid under the road to allow for mass migrations. The tunnels are protected from traffic with grated tops, like a cattle guard, she said. They allow moisture, but are secure under vehicle "compression."

Each one costs about \$8,000 and Fox thinks that they'll need about a half dozen for the Ryder Lake region.

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