



FRASER VALLEY
CONSERVANCY

Western Toad Migration 2026



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Introduction

The Fraser Valley Conservancy (FVC) has been managing the Western Toad migration in the Ryder Lake neighborhood for over a decade and puts mitigation measures into place every summer to help the toads. This year was no different as FVC staff and volunteers were on site to construct fencing and monitor the toad's progress. 2026 was thought to be a large migration based on observations from 2024-2026, with tens of thousands of toads crossing the roads surrounding the wetlands. Changes in migration patterns on an almost weekly basis made it a challenge to manage, but with the cooperation of Ryder Lake residents and visitors, mortality appeared to be limited by the detours and fencing.

Unlike previous years where the toadlet migration was funded by grants, there was no money available this year. In response, the FVC ran a GoFundMe campaign to raise the required funds to help the toads. Thankfully the community support was huge, and enough money was raised to implement monitoring and mitigation plans.

A new development for this year was that the northern parcel of the wetland where the temporary summer fencing is usually installed (48850 Ryder Lake Road) was sold to new owners. Contacting them was an essential step before we could install this fencing. Thankfully, contact was made before the toads began their migration and a verbal agreement was reached. The new owner's contact information (for both 48830 and 48850 Ryder Lake Road) is stored in Donor Perfect.

Tadpole Development Timeline

Unseasonably hot weather in May and June led FVC staff to believe that the migration could be early this year, but cooler weather in late June and early July stalled the toad's development.





During the check on July 2nd, toad tadpoles were observed in the wetland in various stages of development, but most had at least one set of legs by this time. Soon after, a wave of hot weather hit (highs of 22-29 C) and the toads developed rapidly. By the 7th of July, most of the toads had left the water and were staging on western shore of the 48750 Ryder Lake Road property as they finished absorbing their tails. See the “Ryder Lake Tadpole Survey Protocol” for more information on how these tadpole checks are done.

A voluntary detour permit was issued by the City of Chilliwack and detour signs were installed on July 7th and covered by black garbage bags until needed. Information in the form of our updated [toad brochure](#) was also made available at the Ryder Lake community info board and the Elk Mountain Trailhead.

By the 10th of July the toads were on land and beginning to move towards the roads surrounding the wetland. Based on observations, the migration directions appeared as two distinct cohorts staging on opposite sides of the wetland. The first group, staging along the shore at 48750 Ryder Lake Road, headed west reaching Ryder Lake Road on July 13th. The development of the other cohort was a day or two behind. This slightly delayed group of toads staged on the eastern shore of 48850 Ryder Lake Road then went east to Elk View Road and were seen there on July 17th. Most of the toads started off on the Ryder Lake side while an estimated 40%, were on the Elk View side.

Fencing Installation

As the toads finished their development on shore, the fencing installation event took place on July 9th. We were grateful to have the help of volunteers with larger vehicles to transport the fencing equipment to Ryder Lake before the event began.

The fence installation event went smoothly with help from 11 volunteers (seen in figure 1 below), three staff members from the Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition, and two FVC staff members. The fencing installation took a total of 33 volunteer hours (not counting FVC staff time) and a total of 38 person hours when staff time is included.

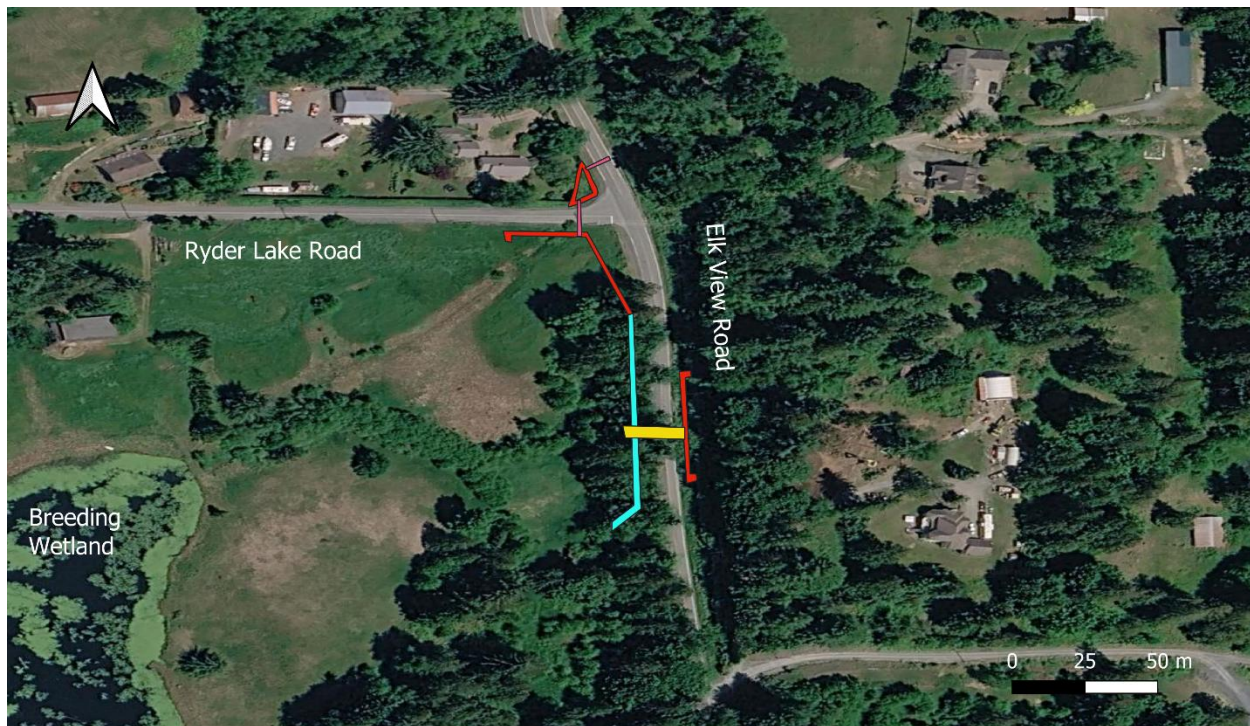




Figure 1: Volunteers working on the fence

The fencing was installed in its typical configuration at the intersection of Elk View and Ryder Lake roads (See figure 2 below). It followed the protocols outlined in the “Temporary Fencing Protocols 2025” document with the only change being that it didn’t follow the northern extent of the eastern fenceline in the pasture into to the corner, it instead cut across the field at an angle from the fenceline to the culvert attachment. This alteration was done after talking with the new landowner and to streamline the migration for the toads.





Summer toad fencing 2026

- Toad tunnel
- Permanent fencing
- Temporary fencing
- Culverts

Figure 2: Toadlet fencing location and shape in 2026

Many of this year's volunteers were from outside the Ryder Lake community. Because of the fundraiser, lots of people from the Fraser Valley and beyond heard about the migration and wanted to come out to help. With this larger volume of volunteers, parking was a challenge. Vehicles were lined up down Elk View Road, parked near the mailboxes and further down. Traffic cones were invaluable for safety in this regard as it made it clearer where the parked vehicles were.

In future years, if there are large numbers of volunteers it may be best for everyone to park at Ryder Lake Hall and carpool back down to the tunnel or talk with the neighbours to see if their driveways can be used for parking spaces.

Migration Monitoring and Detour Management

The first wave of toads to cross the road was on Ryder Lake Road, directly out of the 48750 Ryder Lake Road driveway. The property managers informed FVC staff they were on the move on July 13th and the detour signage directing people away from Elk View and Ryder Lake Roads





was unveiled. At this point there were no toads on Elk View Road. By the 17th, there were toads on all three roads (Ryder Lake, Huston and Elk View) surrounding the wetland, with the vast majority on Ryder Lake Road. Elk View Road had the next highest numbers and Huston only had a few toads on it. FVC staff prepared to alter the detour if needed, as it seemed likely there would be high numbers on Huston Road. This prediction came true, as many of the toads who were staging at the 48750 Ryder Lake Road earlier in the month travelled through the forest to the south before crossing Huston Road in large numbers.

On the 19th, the decision was made to alter the detour and direct people on to Elk View and away from Huston (see figure 3). This was a difficult choice to make, as there were still toadlets on both roads. However, the fencing was containing the majority of the toads near Elk View, and there seemed to be higher numbers of toads crossing Huston. By this time, the large numbers that had crossed Ryder Lake Road had already passed, so it was deemed suitable for vehicle travel.

The detour signs were altered by FVC staff to direct drivers off Huston by using the same locations as before but altering the direction of the arrows. Posts were also published on Facebook and the FVC website explaining the change. This was met with some confusion by Ryder Lake residents and several got in touch with the FVC to ask what was going on. People driving the roads also frequently stopped to ask staff on site what was going on with the toads. In future years, clearer communication and the addition of "detour altered" signs attached to the existing signs, could be helpful in directing residents and other visitors onto the alternate route. During this time, FVC staff were on site every second day to walk Elk View, Huston and Ryder Lake Roads. Only once a road had been clear of toads after 2 monitoring checks was it deemed safe to drive.

Notable "spill" points where toadlets made it through gaps in the fence on Elk View Road were near the culvert leading from the field towards the triangle and at the attachment point between the permanent and temporary fencing near the mailboxes. The western end of the fencing on the Ryder Lake Road side of the intersection was also about 30 meters too short to stop all the toadlets in that area. An extension was considered, but the toadlets in that area moved through quickly enough it was not needed. Ensuring there are extra materials on site is essential during future years in case fence extensions and repairs are needed.



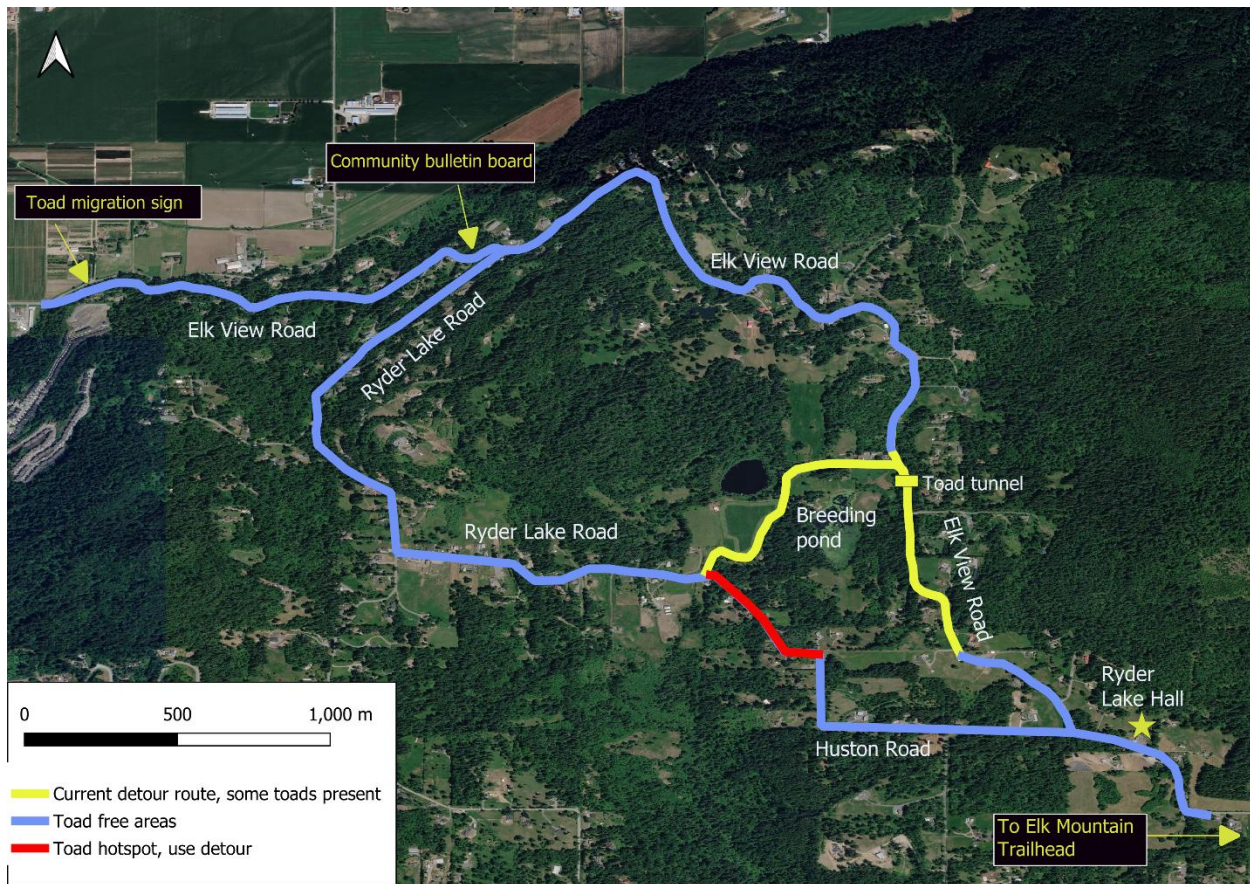


Figure 3: The altered detour route

This altered detour stayed in place for the rest of the migration, as most of the toads were found on Huston Road. These toads were all found farther south from the Ryder Lake/Huston Road intersection. See the highlighted red section in figure 3 above. It appeared that the majority of the toads migrating east towards Elk View used the triangle and associated culverts near the Ryder Lake/Elk View Road intersection (see figure 2 above for location). There were low numbers observed using the toad tunnel. Some were observed on the road above the toad tunnel. It was unclear how they were getting onto the road here. There were also toads seen on the road south of the tunnel and past the end of the permanent fencing though in relatively low numbers (dozens). By July 29th, no more toads were observed moving on Elk View Road and only a few stragglers were seen on Huston Road. Staff declared the migration over as of July 31st. See figure 4 below for a representation of the migration directions in 2026.



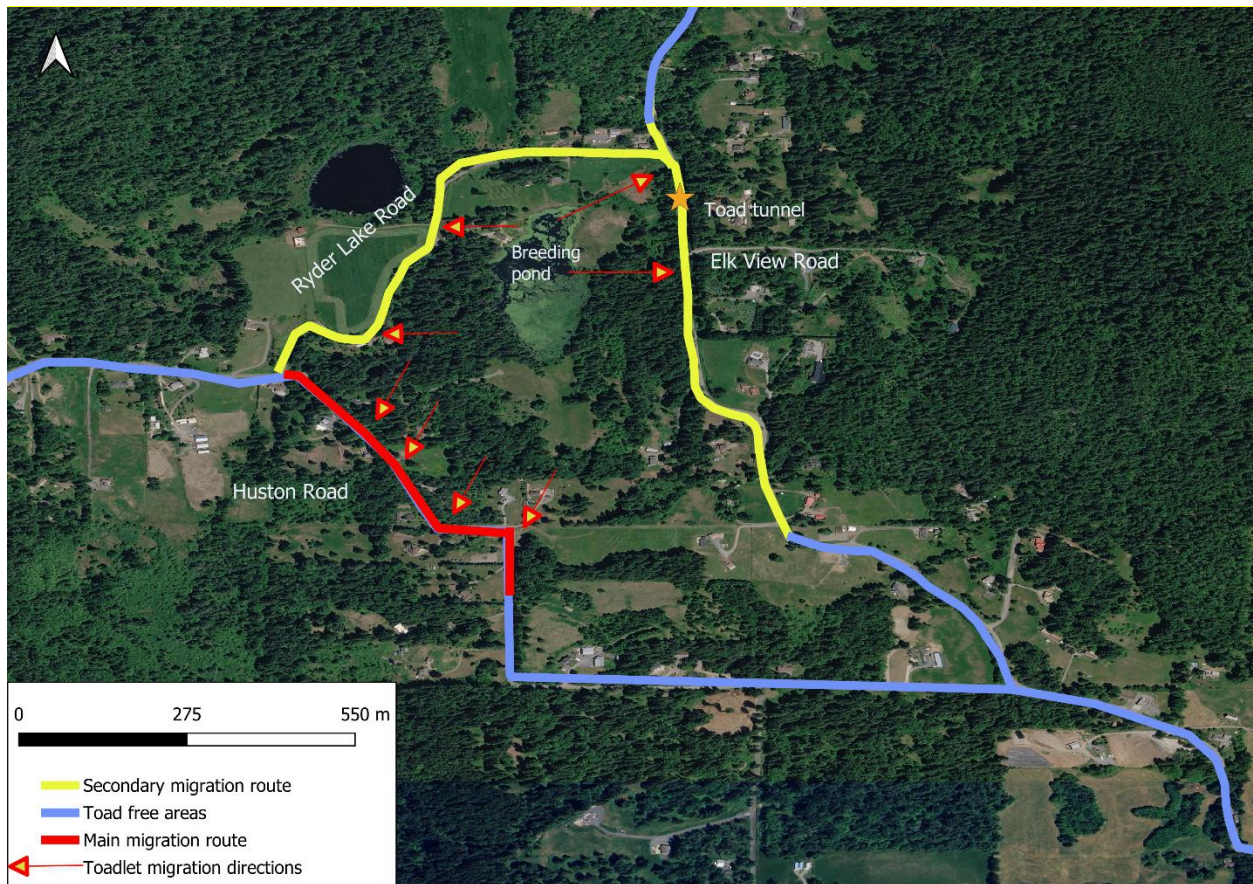


Figure 4: Toad migration directions in 2026

Once the migration was over, the fence was taken down on August 14th with the help of 5 volunteers, all of whom also participated in the fencing installation. It took a total of 12 person hours. The materials were then returned to storage with the help of one of the same volunteers. Going forward, the FVC plans to establish an ongoing agreement with the new landowner to outline plans for future year's fencing installation needs and timelines. There is also a suggestion of replanting the area along the drainage channel with native shrubs now that it's been cleared of blackberry.

Based on 11 years of staff observations, patterns are starting to emerge. The migration directions, since the year of the tunnel installation, are summarized in table 1 below.





Table 1 Estimates of toad presence on roads during summer migration for past 11 years

Year	Elk View Road	Ryder Lake Road (Intersection)	Ryder Lake Road (West)	Huston Road	Notes
2015	Large	Small	None	None	Tunnel installed
2016	Large	Small	None	None	
2017	Moderate	Moderate	None	Large	
2018	Large	Small	None	None	
2019	Moderate	None	Large	Large	Toads only on Huston near intersection of Huston and Ryder Lake Rd
2020	Large	Moderate	None	None	
2021	Large	Large	None	Moderate	
2022	Large	None	None	None	
2023	Moderate	Small	Moderate	Large	
2024	Large	Small	None	None	
2025	Large	None	None	None	
2026	Moderate	Small	Moderate	Large	

Looking at the above table, it appears that toads are on Elk View Road every year in at least moderate numbers. This clearly shows why the toad tunnel and associated fencing is important in its location as it always gets used. Toads seem to go west towards Ryder Lake Road every 2-4 years. This is apart from them going north towards the intersection of Ryder Lake and Elk View Roads where some occur almost annually. Toads appear to go in the direction of Huston Road every 2-3 years.

Additional Observations

During the course of the migration, two detour signs were stolen. The new "toads on the road" sign, at the bottom of Elk View Road, which was made in 2025 was the taken between the 19th and 21st of July, posts and all. Later on one of the four "trail users" directional signs was taken as well. Alternate solutions may need to be explored for future signage such as putting the toads on the road sign further up Elk View where it is less visible to passers by but still obvious for





anyone going up to Ryder Lake. More durable and difficult to steal signage may be an option as well depending on budgetary constraints and permissions from the City of Chilliwack.

In previous years (2022-2025) one to three juvenile Northern Red-legged Frogs were found while monitoring Elk View Road during the toad migration window. This year none were spotted. Adult Red-legged Frogs were found on Elk View Road during spring amphibian surveys so it is unclear why no juveniles were observed.

Pacific Treefrogs were another species observed in lower abundance than in 2024 or 2025. In 2024 they were a common sight along fencelines and in shrubs and were especially abundant on thimbleberry bushes near the mailboxes, with dozens being counted there during each migration monitoring visit. While less were seen near the mailboxes in 2025, they were still abundant along the fenceline. This year there were only one to five spotted near the mailboxes during monitoring visits and only a couple seen along the fences. Several were seen by volunteers near the triangle during the fencing takedown. No Treefrogs had been noted in the area earlier in the season.

A consistent observation when compared to previous years was the number of garter snake road mortalities. Though only anecdotal, no obvious change in number or life stage of deceased snakes was observed. What was observed was a change in the number of live snakes on the 48850 Ryder Lake Road field during migration monitoring visits. There seemed to be a decrease in live snake sightings based on previous years. This may be related to the removal of blackberry, as a snake was seen using the roots as cover.

A potentially important observation from Ryder Lake this year was the strange black marks present on many of the toadlets (see figure 5). A rough estimate would place these marks on perhaps 15-20% of toadlets. From observation it appeared this was the most common on Huston Road. These markings were on various body parts and do not appear to be part of the toadlets normal coloration. This was not observed in previous years. Photos of these markings were passed along to other biologists including BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship staff, FVC contractors and past FVC staff members. Though nobody was sure what the markings represented, some suggestions were made, including fungal disease, burns, partial melanism, and unknown substances stuck to the toad's skin. Provincial staff passed photos on to a specialist in amphibian disease. As of time of writing, no further information is known.





Figure 5: A toadlet with the black markings seen in 2026

This year's toad migration monitoring and other activities were made possible by the generous support of community members and volunteers. An amazing response by donors meant that the work we do was funded for the whole migration, and mortality mitigation measures were successful. The help of on-site volunteers was invaluable during the fencing construction and takedown and the cooperation of the new landowner was essential. Ryder Lake residents continued to support this important natural phenomenon in their community by following the detour, keeping us updated, and helping out.

