Amphibian Egg Mass Field Guide
Lentic-breeding (“Pond”) Species of Whatcom County
(Photos © Stephen Nyman unless otherwise indicated)

1a. Eggs laid in early spring or as late as May (i.e., Western toad), and mass is globular, cylindrical, single eggs, or a long string……………………………………..2
1b. Eggs laid in June or later, and mass is a floating raft (sheet or film)…………..10

2a. Egg mass globular or cylindrical, or eggs laid singly………………………….3
2b. Eggs aligned in a row within a long string……………………………………..Western toad

3a. Multiple, individual egg capsules (jelly around egg) encased in a single, common envelope or small, globular mass (1-2 inches diameter) with eggs packed closely together……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..4
3b. Egg mass does not have a common envelope or is larger than 2 inches diameter; instead resembles a bunch of grapes or eggs are laid singly……………………..6

4a. Egg mass firm to the touch, attached to a twig or stem or on the bottom, often well below the surface; often ≥ 3 inches in diameter…Northwestern salamander
4b. Egg mass soft to the touch, never as large as 3 inches diameter…………….5

5a. Eggs tiny (< 1.5 mm diameter), 10-80 per mass, with no conspicuous capsule around each egg………………………………..Pacific chorus frog (treefrog)
5b. Eggs 2-2.5mm diameter, with a conspicuous capsule around each, giving the appearance of eggs widely separated; few eggs per mass (10-30) and sometimes a single egg……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..Long-toed salamander

6a. Egg mass resembles a bunch of grapes; orange-sized to grapefruit-sized……7
6b. Eggs laid singly……………………………………………………………………….9

7a. Egg mass usually attached to a stem below the surface (although often later floating to the surface), not communally deposited; found in much of Whatcom County …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………Northern red-legged frog
7b. Egg mass usually not attached and in shallows (often less than 8 inches deep), and communally deposited (i.e., aggregation of multiple masses touching one another); species found above 2,000 ft elevation or limited distribution………..8

8a. High elevation species…………………………………………………………..Cascades frog
8b. Low elevation species in Whatcom County, currently known only from a few small watersheds (Samish River, Black Slough, and Sumas River)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..Oregon spotted frog

9a. Eggs attached to twigs or vegetation, not hidden, and small egg masses of more than single eggs usually also occurring at a site…………….Long-toed salamander
9b. Eggs hidden and rarely observed, attached to aquatic vegetation or detritus, often within a rolled leaf………………………………………………………..Rough-skinned newt

10a. Egg mass sheet 1.5-3 ft diameter……………………………………………..American bullfrog
10b. Eggs in foamy film less than 1 ft diameter …………………………………..Green frog

Northwestern salamander
Northern red-legged frog
Pacific chorus frog
Long-toed salamander (Photo at left © Henk Wallays)
American bullfrog
Green frog
Western toad

Oregon spotted frog (top right: single mass; the others are aggregations of multiple egg masses deposited together)

American bullfrog (photo at left © Tristan Schramer)

Rough-skinned newt (photo © William Leonard)

Northern red-legged frog (hatched)

Northern red-legged frog with Northwestern salamander

Long-toed salamander and Northwestern salamander

Cascades frog egg mass aggregation (Photo © Adam Clause)

Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Project (www.whatfrogs.org)