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Education through ringtones

* ON the editorial floor where I sit, often a frog's croaking is heard. The first time I heard it, my colleagues and I thought a frog was moonlighting as a journalist here. But, it was just the journalist's cell phone's ringtone. And it wasn't the Crazy Frog's theme song either, which once was a fad. This was the sound of a real frog's croak. How novel, I thought. And I just found out that the **Centre for Biological Diversity** offers such wildlife ringtones for free on its Web site. If you get to their Web site at www.biologicaldiversity.org, you'll find a link that offers over 40 sounds of endangered species. According to the centre's spokesman, these animal sounds have been turned into ringtones to get people to ponder and find out more about such animals when they hear them as ringtones.

Now, does that really work? I asked a colleague if he would have surfed the Net to find out more about frogs, after hearing that croaking sound in the office. "No, I wouldn't", he said. This shows that not many people are compelled to surf the Internet to find out more about something that they have almost no idea about. I also don't think that the centre merely wanted to jump on the ringtone bandwagon which is now a US\$1 billion (RM3.5 billion) industry in the US itself, although these folks are offering it for free. Well, I guess they are trying other methods to educate people on protecting endangered species and wild places. And just like how they got me to their Web site, maybe others will visit their Web site to learn more about the ringtones. They might also come out wiser after learning how humankind is threatening the endangered species' habitat. Or they might try to make a difference by signing petitions to protect an endangered species or even getting their government representative to support some environmental act. Anyway, here's to hoping that the centre will get more hits and people will come forward to help.