

ANIMAL SPOTLIGHT

THE SPOTTED SALAMANDER

For amphibians like the spotted salamander, spring rain and warmer temperatures create a magical combination. The change in weather is a signal to wake up and lay and fertilize their eggs.

Amphibians are very cool creatures with smooth, moist skin. There are 18 different species of amphibians in Rhode Island, including seven kinds of salamanders. The elusive spotted salamander is the largest found in our state. Their diet consists of insects, worms, slugs, spiders, and millipedes. They grow to be seven to nine inches long and as their name implies, they have bright yellow or orange spots along their black body and tail. Even with those bright spots, it is not easy to find spotted salamanders.

Fun Facts!

Did you know? Spotted salamanders are...

- Active only at night from March through October. They hibernate in winter.
- Experts at hiding under rocks, leaf litter, logs and underground burrows during the day.
- Silent – unlike frogs, they do not make noises.
- Sensitive to pollution and other changes in the environment.
- Found in the forest near rivers and streams.
- Good at protecting themselves. If scared, spotted salamanders produce a bad tasting toxin in glands on their backs and tails. This toxin lets predators know they are not a good meal.
- Unable to hear. Salamanders do not have eardrums; instead they feel vibrations through their body.
- Able to absorb oxygen through their skin. This is true for all amphibians.



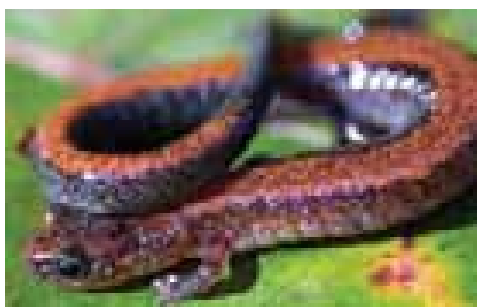
Spring is the best time to search for salamanders.

Look closely around a vernal pool in a wooded area. Vernal pools are shallow pools of water that form in the spring and eventually dry up. They provide ideal habitats for salamanders.



Remember to cover your hands in mud or dirt before picking up a salamander. This prevents any toxins on your hands from hurting the animal. Be very careful and make sure to place them back on the ground exactly where you found them.

If you want to learn more about salamanders, join Audubon and search with the experts for these cool creatures. Visit www.asri.org for details on these and other programs for families.



Check out these great resources:

Discover Nature in Water and Wetlands by Elizabeth P. Lawlor
Stokes Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles by Thomas F. Tynning

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