

Woodland Pool Wildlife

a photo identification guide

New York State
Department of
Environmental
Conservation



This guide includes the group of wildlife that depends on woodland pools for breeding (mole salamanders, wood frog and fairy shrimp) and a number of other animals that use pool habitat for different life activities. More comprehensive guides to wildlife, vernal pools and wetland plants may be needed to identify the rich diversity of life that thrives in this habitat.

Mole Salamanders

These pool-breeding salamanders live in the forest and spend much of their time underground.



Spotted salamander

Ambystoma maculatum

Gray to black with yellow spots in 2 rows along back

Size: adult length is usually 5.0-8.0 inches in total length (TL)

Eggs: firm masses of 50-200 clear or white eggs, attached to twigs or stems



Jefferson salamander

Ambystoma jeffersonianum

Gray to brown with pale blue to white flecked underside

Size: adult length is usually 4.0-7.0 inches in TL, large and robust

Eggs: masses of 20-30 eggs, often sausage shaped

NOTE: Hybrids of Jefferson and blue-spotted salamanders are common and have features of both species.



Blue-spotted salamander

Ambystoma laterale

Coloring resembles enamelware pots, black with blue-silver flecks

Size: adult length is usually 3.0-5.0 inches in TL, slender bodied

Eggs: laid singly, in small clusters, or in sheets on pool bottom



Marbled salamander

Ambystoma opacum

Dark with silver-gray (females) to white (males) with bands on back

Size: adult length is usually 3.5-4.0 inches in TL, stout bodied

Eggs: between 50-200 laid in fall in dry pool bed

The Woodland Pool Conservation Program is part of a larger NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program initiative to partner with local communities to conserve the diversity of plants, animals and habitats that sustain the health and resiliency of the entire estuary watershed. For more information, contact: Laura Heady, Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator, at 845-256-3061 (ltheady@gw.dec.state.ny.us), or visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/52325.html>.



Cornell University



Wood frog

Rana sylvatica



Adult

by Michael Barnhart



Adults in amplexus

by Steve Chorvas

Orange to dark brown with dark "mask" from each eye to tympanum

Size: adult length is usually 1.5-3.0 inches

Eggs: > 1,000 in a 2.5-4.0--inch diameter mass, often laid communally in "rafts"

Fairy shrimp

Anostracan species



Female

by Laura Heady



Male

by Meredith Taylor

Variable in color with stalked eyes; swim upside down in pools from late winter to early spring

Size: adult length is usually 0.5-1.5 inches

Eggs: carried in a brood pouch, eventually released

Signs of Pool Breeding

The presence of spermatophores, egg masses and developing amphibians in woodland pools indicate breeding activity.



Spermatophores are tiny "sperm packets" left by male salamanders on the bottoms of pools.

by Mike Rubbo



Wood frog egg masses do not have an outer matrix like salamander egg masses.

by Laura Heady



Wood frog larvae hatch early and are often the only frog tadpoles seen in pools in the spring.

by Laura Heady



Spotted salamander egg masses are very firm.

by Laura Heady



Jefferson salamander egg masses are often long and attached to vegetation.

by Mike Rubbo



Salamander larvae have external gills, unlike frog larvae.

by Laura Heady

More Woodland Pool Wildlife

These species may use woodland pools for foraging, resting, and/or breeding in addition to using other habitat types.

Spotted turtle



by Mike Rubbo

Spring peeper



by Ray Sussmann

American toad



by Laura Heady

Four-toed salamander



by Laura Heady

Blanding's turtle*



by Jaime Hazard

Spadefoot toad**



by Jesse W. Jaycox

Wood duck



by Mike Pogue

Red-spotted newt



by Laura Heady

* In the Hudson Valley, found in Dutchess County. ** In the Hudson Valley, found in Dutchess and Albany counties.

For more information: *The Amphibians and Reptiles of New York State* (Gibbs et al. 2007)
A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools (Kenney and Burne 2001).