

## Salamanders in [The Last Green Valley!](#)

Did you know that 2014 was the YEAR OF THE SALAMANDER? There is a lot to learn!

Have you ever found a salamander while raking leaves, or when turning over rocks and logs, or while exploring the woods? I have! It is exciting!



- Salamanders are hard to see because they spend most of their time in forested areas, living under rocks and fallen logs or in underground burrows. The best time of year to see these creatures is in spring when they move to wet areas to lay their eggs. These wet areas include ponds, ditches, marshes, meadows and very special vernal pools. There are many types of vernal pools, but generally a vernal pool is a low spot in a forest or meadow that fills with water during winter and spring and then dries out by late summer.
- Salamanders have 4 legs and a tail. (I only have 2 legs and no tail)!
- Salamanders like to live in cool moist places, and are amphibians, the same as frogs and toads. (I live to live in a house, and I am a human)!
- All salamanders are carnivores. They eat insects, worms, small animals, and even other salamanders. With the help of their eyesight and good sense of smell, salamanders are able to find their prey. (I eat veggies)!
- Salamanders are completely silent. (I talk, sing, and laugh – a lot)!
- Salamanders become dormant in the winter, and then emerge in spring. (I slow down a lot in the winter, and I come to life in the spring, too)!

Please Support Your Local Salamanders! Watch them, but **do not** disturb or collect them. You can even help [create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for your neighborhood salamanders](#). Check this cool info out about salamanders from [CT](#) and [MA](#).

**So – now that you have read all this – are you a SALAMANDER or a HUMAN?**

*Hello Handsome!*



## How Many Salamander Species Are Native to Connecticut?

The answer is 12! Four of Connecticut's salamanders are on the state's List of Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species.

<a href="#">Blue-spotted Salamander</a> (PDF)	<a href="#">Northern Redback Salamander</a> (PDF)
<a href="#">Common Mudpuppy</a> (PDF)	<a href="#">Northern Slimy Salamander</a> (PDF)
<a href="#">Four-toed Salamander</a> (PDF)	<a href="#">Northern Spring Salamander</a> (PDF)
<a href="#">Jefferson Salamander</a> (PDF)	<a href="#">Northern Two-lined Salamander</a> (PDF)
<a href="#">Marbled Salamander</a> (PDF)	<a href="#">Red-spotted Newt</a> (PDF)
<a href="#">Northern Dusky Salamander</a> (PDF)	<a href="#">Spotted Salamander</a> (PDF)

### Lizard or Salamander?

Maybe you have found a salamander while raking leaves, or when turning over rocks and logs, or while exploring the woods as a child. Many who come upon a salamander think they have found a lizard. At first glance, salamanders and lizards look a lot alike – small animals with four legs, a tail, and a similar body shape. However, up close, salamanders and lizards are very different. First of all, these two animals live in different habitats. Salamanders prefer cool, moist places, while lizards prefer dry, warmer places. A lizard's body is covered with tough scales, while a salamander's body is smooth and slippery. Most salamanders do not have claws on their feet, while lizards do. Although lizards and salamanders look alike, they are not closely related. Lizards are reptiles and are more closely related to snakes and turtles. Salamanders are amphibians, the same as frogs and toads.

### Why Are Amphibians Special?

Amphibians spend part of their lives on land and part in water. They have two life stages – a larval stage and an adult stage that are usually different from one another. The larval stage is typically aquatic, while the adult stage is typically terrestrial. Amphibians are cold-blooded, which means their body temperature is the same as the surrounding air, soil, or water. Amphibians can adjust their body temperature by choosing warm or cold places to rest. They become inactive when it is cold, but they can tolerate low temperatures.

Most amphibians have lungs. However, some species of salamanders do not have lungs, including Connecticut's most-common salamander, the redback. All amphibians use their thin, moist skin to take in oxygen. Many breathe through gills, especially when in their larval stage.

### Why Are Salamanders Special?

All salamanders are carnivores. They eat insects, worms, small animals, and even other salamanders. With the help of their eyesight and good sense of smell, salamanders are able to find their prey.

Compared to the often noisy frogs and toads, salamanders are completely silent.

Salamanders have glands under their skin that produce mucus to keep the skin moist. Other glands make poisons that can be distasteful or harmful to predators. A salamander's bright colors warn predators that it is probably distasteful or poisonous.

Most salamanders lay eggs. Because these eggs do not have shells, they must be laid in water or in moist places. The eggs are laid in a mass, string, or individually. The larvae that hatch from the eggs look similar to tadpoles. However, tadpoles have large round heads, while larval salamanders have long, narrow heads. Tadpoles have two gills that are hidden within gill slits and are not obvious. Salamander larvae have visible gills.

### Threats to Salamanders

The greatest threat faced by Connecticut's salamander populations is the loss of habitat. Habitats are usually destroyed during development or are degraded by pollution (i.e., overuse of fertilizers and pesticides), increasing habitat fragmentation, and the introduction and invasion of non-native plants.

Several species of native salamanders are currently experiencing a long-term decline, and four are on Connecticut's list of Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species. Many salamander species are localized and restricted to specific habitat types. Unfortunately, when these habitats are destroyed, the salamanders found there disappear too. Other than a few exceptions, salamanders do not relocate long distances to new habitats. Even if suitable habitat is located nearby, migration is very difficult due to the numerous roads that dissect across Connecticut. When these slow-moving creatures cross roads (particularly during spring migration to breeding pools), hundreds are killed by cars.

Find this info and more on: [http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&Q=537520&deepNav\\_GID=1655](http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&Q=537520&deepNav_GID=1655)