Woodland Pool Wildlife
a photo identification guide

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.
**Wood frog**
*Rana sylvatica*

- **Adult**: 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"

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**Fairy shrimp**
*Anostracan species*

- **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

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**Signs of Pool Breeding**

- **Spermatophores**: Tiny "sperm packets" left by male salamanders on the bottoms of pools.
- **Wood frog egg masses**: Do not have an outer matrix like salamander egg masses.
- **Wood frog larvae**: Hatch early and are often the only frog tadpoles seen in pools in the spring.
- **Spotted salamander egg masses**: Are very firm.
- **Jefferson salamander egg masses**: Are often long and attached to vegetation.
- **Salamander larvae**: Have external gills, unlike frog larvae.

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**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**
- **Spring peeper**
- **American toad**
- **Four-toed salamander**
- **Blanding’s turtle***
- **Spadefoot toad****
- **Wood duck**
- **Red-spotted newt**

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

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**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).