

Reptiles and Amphibians of Eagle Marsh



FROGS, TOADS, AND SALAMANDERS ARE AMPHIBIANS

Most begin life as eggs in water, become tadpoles, and later metamorphose into adults that eat insects, worms, fish, smaller amphibians, and even small mammals. In winter they hibernate under water or soil. Amphibians are indicators of environmental health and are in decline worldwide.

Frogs and toads are numerous near this trail, while salamanders live in the wooded areas of Eagle Marsh.



AMERICAN TOAD *Bufo americana*

Light brown with dark spots containing one or two warts. American toads do not drink water, but rather absorb it through their skin. Large bumps behind the eyes are poison glands that discharge a fluid distasteful to predators. Their sticky tongue, attached at front of the lower jaw, snaps out to catch worms or insects.

COMMON SNAPPING TURTLE

Chelydra serpentina serpentina

Three-ridged bumpy shell and a long, saw-toothed tail. Large snapping turtles sometimes weigh up to 35 pounds. Snappers can bite aggressively if they feel threatened. Stay away! The snapping turtle cannot retreat completely into its shell because the bottom shell (plastron) is very small.



MIDLAND PAINTED TURTLE *Chrysemys picta marginata*

Smooth dark green to brown upper shell (carapace) with ornate red or orange markings around the edge and yellow below. Painted turtles are aquatic, but come out of the water to lay their eggs under soil. When baby turtles are born, they rush to the water for greater safety from predators.

As winter approaches, painted turtles seek deep water and burrow into the mud at the bottom. They take the oxygen they need to survive out of the water through the inner lining of the mouth and cloaca (posterior opening).

NOTE: Collecting or removing native amphibians or reptiles from Eagle Marsh is strictly forbidden.

Sign courtesy of John and Louise Larsen



BLUE SPOTTED SALAMANDER *Ambystoma laterale*

These beautiful and elusive salamanders live in Eagle Marsh woods, hidden under logs and leaves. They emerge in early spring to mate.



NORTHERN LEOPARD FROG *Rana pipiens*

Three to five inches long, green-gray or brown with black "leopard spots" located within two distinct yellow ridges extending along each side of the back, with a light stripe on upper jaw. Northern leopard frogs can jump up to five feet in a zigzag pattern when startled.

Northern leopard frogs are classified as an Indiana species of special concern.

EASTERN GARTER SNAKE *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*

Has two yellow stripes on each side and a third on top. The area between stripes is a double row of black spots or red blotches. They can emit a slimy, smelly goo (musk) to ward off predators.

Snakes have no outer ears but have sensitive nerves connected to their lower jaw and underside picking up vibrations from the ground



NORTHERN WATER SNAKE *Nerodia sipedon sipedon*

Highly variable in color, although generally dark brown with cross bands colored reddish-brown to black. Adults average around three feet in length. These snakes prefer water and are often seen basking on logs in the water. They are not venomous or dangerous, but can be very defensive.

Northern water snakes are ovoviviparous – the eggs incubate inside of the female and she gives birth to live young that emerge from membranous sacs that are modified eggs.



TURTLES AND SNAKES ARE REPTILES

Turtles eat water plants, insects, small invertebrates and fish. Snakes eat mostly small fish, frogs, salamanders, and rodents.

Turtles are often seen swimming in the ponds near this trail or basking nearby. If you're lucky, you might see a snake in the water or near the trail.