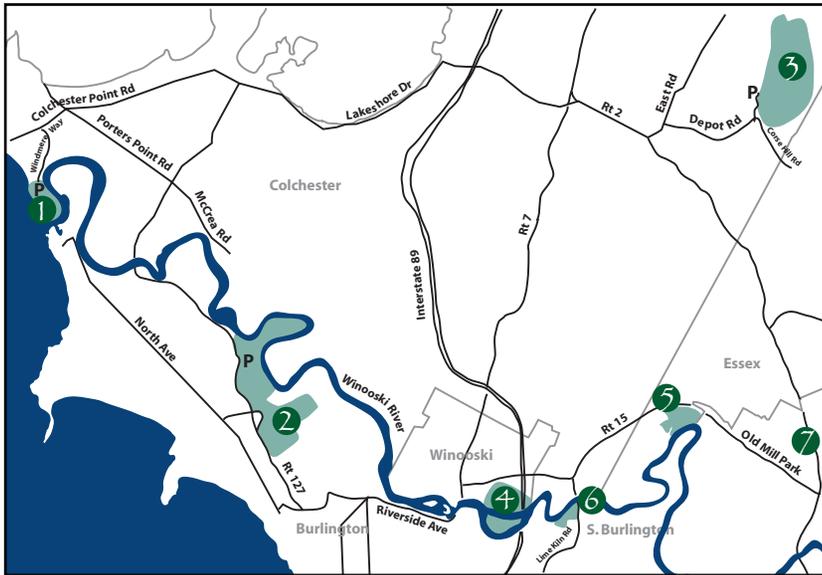


Directions to Highlighted WVPD Natural Areas:



- 1 Delta Park off Windermere Way in Colchester;
- 2 Ethan Allen Homestead off RT 127 in Burlington;
- 3 Colchester Pond Natural Area off Depot Rd in Colchester;
- 4 Winooski Nature Trail off RT 15 in Winooski;
- 5 Woodside Natural Area off RT 15 across from Fort Ethan Allen in Essex;
- 6 Winooski Gorge off Lime Kiln Rd and RT 15 in South Burlington;
- 7 Old Mill Park off RT 15 in Jericho

This project made possible by:

Lake Champlain
Basin Program
www.lcbp.org



and

The Sweet
Water Trust



The **Winooski Valley Park District** is a cooperative partnership between the communities of Burlington, Colchester, Essex, Jericho, South Burlington, Williston, and Winooski. Its mission is to preserve outstanding natural areas for the purposes of conservation, stewardship education, wildlife habitat preservation, passive recreation, and use as outdoor classrooms.

~Guide created by Sherry Berrin, WVPD, 2003

A Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians

in the

Winooski Valley Park District Natural Areas

Winooski Valley Park District
Ethan Allen Homestead
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Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles

Purpose of this guide: This guide is an introduction to some common, local amphibians and reptiles in the Winooski River and Lake Champlain Watersheds. The WVPD hopes to educate park visitors to a group of wildlife often overlooked and underappreciated. We hope this guide starts you on a new journey of exploration with your eyes and ears!

~WVPD Staff

Reptiles and Amphibians:



Play an important role in biodiversity;



Are found in many habitats including your own backyard;



Are both predator and prey in the natural world;



Act as ecological indicators of habitat health and quality for humans and other wildlife.

Searching for Reptiles and Amphibians-



Reptiles and amphibians are wild animals and some snakes and turtles are likely to bite when frightened. Take a photo or use binoculars for identification. It is less stressful on the animal and you too!



HANDLING: Never pick up a frog or salamander with dry hands or with lotion or insect repellent on your hands. Amphibians have a permeable (moist) skin that helps them breathe and allows pollutants to penetrate easily. Always wash your hands!

Known Vermont Species:

Amphibians

American Toad
Gray Treefrog
*Western Chorus Frog**
Green Frog
Wood Frog
Northern Leopard Frog

*Jefferson Salamander**
Spotted Salamander
Spring Salamander
*Mudpuppy**
Northern Two-lined Salamander
Eastern Red-backed Salamander

Reptiles

Snapping Turtle
*Spotted Turtle**
*Northern Map Turtle**
*Spiny Softshell Turtle**

*Eastern Racer**
*Eastern Ratsnake**
*Timber Rattlesnake**
Smooth Greensnake
Red-bellied Snake
Common Gartersnake

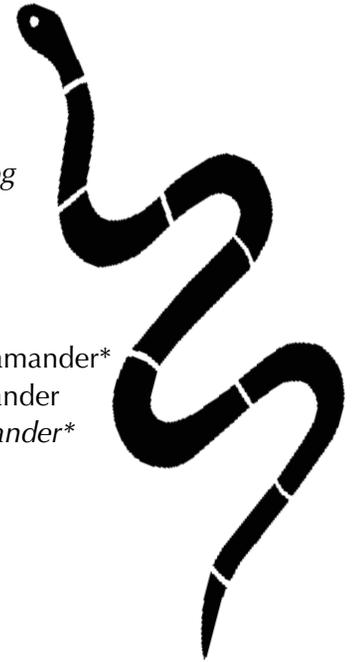
*Fowler's Toad**
Spring Peeper
American Bullfrog
Pickerel Frog
Mink Frog

*Blue-spotted Salamander**
N. Dusky Salamander
*Four-toed Salamander**
Eastern Newt

Painted Turtle
*Wood Turtle**
*Stinkpot Turtle**

Ring-necked Snake
Milksnake
*Northern Watersnake**
DeKay's Brownsnake
*Eastern Ribbonsnake**

*Common Five-lined Skink**



*VT State Rare, Threatened or Endangered
ITALICS = species found in WVPD natural areas (as of 2003)

① Delta Park: Colchester



Photo by Dr. Clayton C. Barclay

Common Gartersnake (*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*)

ID: 18-26 inches long; varying coloration and pattern- black, dark brown, or greenish with yellowish stripes or spots most common; belly green to yellow.

Habitat & Behavior:

Common snake found in a variety of natural habitats- meadows, marshes, woodlands, & often near water- and in urban areas- lawns, gardens, cemeteries, and cityparks. Easy to find, often seen basking in the sun on warm summer days. When frightened, they emit a musky, unpleasant odor. Feed mainly on frogs, salamanders, small fish, tadpoles and worms.



Photo by Brian Carlson, WVPD staff

Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)

ID: 2-5 inches long; a green to brown frog with irregularly shaped dark, rounded spots with a light border (different from Pickerel Frogs that have squarish, dark spots). The mating call is described as a snoring croak that can last one to three seconds.

Habitat & Behavior:

Commonly found in fields, meadows and woodlands near water. Most active at night but often can be seen during summer days. Frogs emerge from winter hideaways in early April. These frogs can be seen frantically leaping about when alarmed. Feed mainly on worms, spiders, and insects. Overwinter in mud at the bottom of streams, ponds, and lakes.

② Ethan Allen Homestead: Burlington



Photo by Brian Carlson, WVPD staff

Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*)

ID: 1½ - 2½ inches long; a brownish frog with a dark, raccoon-like mask. The call is described as a duck-like quacking and is commonly heard during the early spring breeding season.

Habitat & Behavior:

A woodland frog that is rarely found in water, except during its short breeding season. In early spring, it emerges from winter hideaways and migrate to vernal pools (vernal pool= a temporary pool of water that is free of breeding populations of fish). It lays thousands of eggs in tennis ball sized masses with a jelly-like outer layer. This frog can partially freeze as it overwinters under forest leaf litter.



Photo by Dr. Clayton C. Barclay

Bull Frog (*Rana catesbeiana*)

ID: 3½ - 6 inches long; a plain green frog with brownish patterns on its back and a whitish belly (colors can vary). It has ridges that run from the eyes and around the eardrum (in Green Frogs these ridges extend down their backs). Its call is described as a deep "jug-o-rum" sound.

Habitat & Behavior:

Found in lakes, ponds and other permanent bodies of water. They feed mainly on insects and other small invertebrates, but have been known to prey on mice, snakes, birds and even other frogs! Can stay underwater for many minutes but when caught, they give a very long and loud distress cry (lasts up to 5 sec.)!

Colchester Pond Natural Area: Colchester



Red Eft
(juvenile)
stage

Eastern Newt

(*Notophthalmus viridescens*)

ID: 2¼ - 5 inches (adults), 1½ - 3½ inches long (efts); adults are green to yellow and efts are red-orange, with red spots evident in both stages.

Habitat & Behavior:

Adult newts are aquatic and rely on permanent bodies of water where they feed on insect larvae, worms and other amphibian eggs. Efts live on land and are active in daylight (especially after warm rains). They are abundant in some areas, and roam forest floors for 2-5 years. Their bright coloring is considered a "warning" sign as both adults and juveniles have toxic skin secretions to ward off predators.



-Photo by Martha Head, WVPD staff

Eastern Milksnake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*)

ID: 24-36 inches long; these snakes can be identified by the large reddish-brown "blotches" (outlined in black) down the snakes back. Also look for smaller "blotches" on sides alternating with larger ones on a grayish background.

Habitat & Behavior:

Found in a variety of habitats including fields and woodlands where they feed mainly on rodents. This snake has been the victim of misleading identification and mistaken identity. Locally called an "adder" (a venomous snake of Europe) and were once thought to steal milk from cows. Commonly found in barns searching for prey.

Other Herps to See and Hear!



Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*)

-Photo by Leo Kenney

Listen for these small frogs in early spring and summer as hundreds sing a chorus of high pitched "peeps"

4 Winooski Nature Trail, Winooski

Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)

VT's largest turtle & often misunderstood- they venture out of water only to lay eggs or move to another pond.

5 Woodside Park, Essex



American Toad (*Bufo americanus*)

-Photo by Leo Kenney

This frog is commonly seen and heard (a long musical trill) throughout the Champlain Valley!

6 Winooski Gorge, S. Burl.



Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*)

A colorful turtle most commonly seen basking on logs during warm, sunny days!



E. Red-backed Salamander

(*Plethodon cinereus*)

VT's most common salamander- lift a log

and you're likely to see one!

7 Old Mill Park, Jericho

Spotted Salamander

(*Ambystoma maculatum*)

This beautiful & large salamander (up to 8in) can be seen during its spring migration to vernal pools - watch out for them on roads!



Citizen Monitoring Opportunities:

Join the Winooski Valley Park District in monitoring reptiles and amphibians in its natural areas.

Call WVPD at
(802) 863-5744

References:

- Andrews, J., *"The Atlas of the Reptiles and Amphibians of VT."*
- Conant, R. & J. Collins, *"Peterson Field Guides: Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central America."*
- Kenney, L. & M. Burne, *"A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools."*
- Tyning T., *"Stokes Nature Guides: A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles."*

Websites:

- www.pwrc.usgs.gov
- www.parcplace.org