



Blue Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*) and Complex

Am-bisto-mah lat-er-alley

**Other Blue Spotted Salamander hybrids/complexes*



Description: Blue spotted salamanders are a small to medium sized, fairly robustly built mole salamander ranging from 3 to 5 ½ inches. Ground color can be black to bluish-black, with varying amounts of distinct, bright blue spots and flecking along the limbs, body, and tail. Costal grooves are present. Some specimens may have few to no blue flecking. A larger, paler colored hybrid between the blue spotted salamander and Jefferson's salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*), and in Wisconsin, a triploid form, *Ambystoma tremblayi*, also occasionally occurs in Wisconsin. The evolutionary history of these forms in the state are not fully understood, and they are lumped in with the nominate species *A. laterale* until this taxonomy can be sorted.

Taxonomy and Classification:

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata/Urodela

Suborder: Salamandroidea

Family: Ambystomatidae

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Genus: Ambystoma

Species: *Ambystoma laterale** and *Ambystoma jeffersonianum**. Also *Ambystoma tremblayi**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Confusing/Similar Species: Blue spotted, Tremblay's, and Jefferson's salamanders are fairly distinct as adults, and are not likely to be confused with other Wisconsin caudate/salamander species. For tadpole/larvae identification, see the following link below:

<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/pdf/level1/wepp/TadpoleLarvalSalamanderKeys.pdf>

Etymology: Ambystoma-Amblys (blunt) stoma (mouth). Also Anabystoma (cram into the mouth). laterale-lateralis (of the side).

Subspecies: None. Also see forms above.

Range & Habitat: Occurs statewide in suitable habitat; Blue spotted salamanders are primarily a forest and woodland dwelling species, being found in hardwood, mixed, and coniferous forests with temporary ephemeral ponds and wetlands for breeding.

Habits & Natural History: Blue spotted salamanders are perhaps the most widespread species of salamander in Wisconsin, and are often more tolerant of drier, sandier soils than most other salamanders. As with other mole salamanders, this species congregates and breeds in shallow, temporary ponds and wetlands in early spring (March to May), and is often found in association with other species such as central newts, eastern tiger salamanders, and spotted salamanders. In forested habitats, they inhabit the leaf litter, under rocks, logs, fallen bark, and other debris where they feed primarily on tiny insects, isopods, and other invertebrates while serving an important part in carbon cycling.

Phenology: Blue spotted salamanders begin emerging from overwintering during the first warm rains of late March, April, or early May and remain active throughout the year through September or October (or even later if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit).

Conservation Status: WI Common, with no special protections, but regulated by the WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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