



## **Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*)**

*Am-bisto-mah mack-you-lot-um*



**Description:** 4 to 7 ½ inches. The spotted salamander is a fairly stocky, heavily built species of mole salamander with a ground color of black to bluish black with two rows of rounded, linear, yellow spots along the dorsum and tail. There may also be a pair of orangeish spots on back of the head and neck as well. Its lateral sides are paler in color, and costal grooves are present. The linear, rounded spots of this salamander distinguish them from the eastern tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), with which they are often confused with.

### **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

<http://www.madisonherps.org>

**Genus:** Ambystoma

**Species:** *Ambystoma maculatum*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

**Similar/Confusing Species:** Eastern tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) have much more variable amounts of irregular shaped and oriented pale colored spots and/or blotches. 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). maculatum-macula (spot) or maculosus (dappled or spotted).

**Subspecies:** None.

**Range & Habitat:** Spotted salamanders are found primarily in the northern third of Wisconsin, but may extend further south in extreme eastern portions along Lake Michigan. This is a primarily woodland or forest dwelling species, being found in deciduous to mixed forests and woodlots.

**Habits & Natural History:** The spotted salamander is a medium sized, stout bodied mole salamander. This species is largely fossorial, and spends most of its active period underground, often only being seen above ground during the early spring and late summer or fall. Spotted salamanders congregate and breed in shallow, temporary ephemeral ponds and wetlands in March and April, where they are often associated with the presence of other species of salamanders such as blue spotted and eastern tiger salamanders. Spotted salamanders will emit distasteful skin secretions to avoid predation or when handled.

**Phenology:** 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) although they are very fossorial during non-migratory periods.

**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](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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