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Blue Spotted Salamander Complex (*Ambystoma laterale*), (*Ambystoma tremblayi*), and (*Ambystoma jeffersonium*)

Flecks of Blue on the Forest Floor!

Blue spotted salamanders are relatively small to medium sized mole salamanders indigenous to the woodlands and forests of the Midwestern and Northeastern United States, and southeastern Canada. An important forest inhabitant over much of its range, these beautiful salamanders play many different roles in their ecosystems, including acting as parts in nutrient and carbon cycling, prey for many other birds, reptiles, and mammals, and serving as environmental bioindicators of the overall environment! These small to medium sized, somewhat elongated salamanders are typically blackish to dark brown with variable amounts of brighter vibrant blue spots, blotches, and/or speckling. A few individuals may be more uniformly blackish or grayish with faint or absent patterning. Some populations of these species also consist of unusual, all female, triploid individuals comprising of Tremblay's salamanders and Jefferson's salamanders. These vibrant little blue and black gems of the salamander world may be infrequently kept and bred in captivity, but are often the most common, or at least widespread salamander species over much its range, and can make for hardy and voracious captives for nature and environmental study overall!

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata/Urodela

Suborder: Salamandroidea

Family: Ambystomatidae

Genus: *Ambystoma*

Species: *Ambystoma laterale**, *Ambystoma tremblayi*, and *Ambystoma jeffersonium**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Captive longevity of these species is uncertain. However, if provided the proper care, blue spotted salamanders may attain longevity of at least 5 or more years.

Distribution and Habitat

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Blue spotted salamanders are often a common to locally common and widespread salamander species, usually being partial to forested and woodland areas including mixed, deciduous, or coniferous forests with temporary vernal or ephemeral ponds of the Midwestern and Northeastern United States, and portions of southern to south eastern Canada, including Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. They are rare to absent in more open, non-forested regions.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Blue spotted salamanders are relatively small to mid-sized salamanders which typically can range from 3 ½ to 7 ½ inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. A single adult to small group of blue spotted salamanders can be housed in a 10 to 20 gallon aquarium or other enclosure or sufficient size and space with coconut husk, chemical free potting soil, or cypress mulch substrate. Provide a large, shallow water dish and change frequently or when dirtied. Due to their sensitive skin, water with heavy metals, chlorines, or contaminants should *not* be used. Artificial plants, cork bark hides, and driftwood can also be included as cage furnishings and additional hiding places. Floor space is more important than height for these salamanders.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Blue spotted salamanders have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it in moderated amounts can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). Maintain these salamanders within a temperature range of low 60's to mid-70 degrees F. Do not exceed 80 degrees F. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; Blue spotted salamanders are insectivorous, and in the wild they will feed on a variety of insects, worms, and other invertebrates. They will also occasionally consume smaller vertebrates as well, and can also be cannibalistic under certain circumstances. In captivity, these salamanders have voracious appetites, but should not be overfed in order to prevent obesity and other health related concerns. Providing variety is important, and these salamanders can be fed chemical and pesticide free earthworms, waxworms, silkworms, crickets, or roaches. No additional vitamin, mineral, or nutrient supplements are required to maintain blue spotted salamanders if the above varied diet is followed, although gutloading or supplementing with calcium and vitamin D3 can still be beneficial for their optimal health and well-being. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

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Blue spotted salamanders are delicate, soft bodied amphibians with sensitive, permeable skin as with most amphibians. Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling them, and avoid wearing any lotions, creams, or oils before handling any amphibian. Handling these salamanders should be minimized whenever possible and only when absolutely necessary.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

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

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers.

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