



*Eric Roscoe

Eastern Newts/Efts *(Notophthalmus viridescens ssp.)*

Amphibians with Unique Life Cycles

The eastern newt is a relatively small newt that undergoes three typical life stages, including the aquatic larvae, the efts (a terrestrial, juvenile form), and the typically aquatic adults (which may also become terrestrial depending on water levels and other environmental conditions). Eastern newts typically range in ground color from blackish, to olive, or olive brown with a row of small, reddish spots, dashes, or streaks present. The belly, or ventral surface is typically yellowish with dark mottling or speckling. The Eft stage has rougher, more granular skin varying in color from bright reddish, reddish orange, reddish brown, to brown. Subspecies include the Eastern Newt (*N. viridescens viridescens*), Central Newt (*N. viridescens louisianensis*), Broken Striped Newt (*N. viridescens dorsalis*), and Peninsula Newt (*N. viridescens piaropicola*).

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: Salamandridae

Genus: *Notophthalmus*

Species: *Notophthalmus viridescens**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Captive longevity is uncertain, but potentially up to 5 years or more. These newts can attain longevity of 10 to 15 years in the wild.

Distribution and Habitat

Eastern newts are relatively small to medium sized newts that range widely throughout the eastern United States and southern to southeastern Canada depending on the subspecies. They may range from the southeastern United States, through the eastern coastal region, peninsular Florida, and portions of the Midwestern and Great Lakes region, as well as into Ontario and Quebec. Eastern newts are found in well vegetated woodland ponds or pools, roadside ditches, river backwaters, and surrounding woodlots, deciduous, and coniferous forests.

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Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Depending on the life stage and subspecies, eastern newts can range from 2 to 5 ½ inches as adults.

Housing and Enclosure

With the exception of certain environmental conditions, adult eastern newts are primarily aquatic and require the appropriate aquatic setup. Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured top or aquarium hood. A 10 to 20 gallon aquarium, terrarium, or other enclosure is suitable for these newts. They can also be kept communally in proportionally larger housing. The enclosure should consist of a primarily aquatic setup with a floating platform or other dry area these newts can resort to on a sand or gravel substrate. An appropriate filter can be used to help maintain water clarity and cleanliness. Also provide ample hiding opportunities in the aquarium using live plants and rocks. Enclosures should be spot cleaned, sterilized, and water cleaned and changed regularly every 1 to 2 weeks. Efts and some adults can be kept in a moist terrestrial setup of similar proportions consisting of a moist, chemical and pesticide free potting soil, sphagnum moss, or damp paper towels that should be misted and cleaned regularly.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Eastern newts can tolerate a wide range of temperatures as low as 40 to 50 degrees F during the winter (but not at or below freezing). Maintain adequate temperatures of 60 to 75 degrees F using room temperature, under tank heating mat, or aquarium heating elements. Although these newts do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, 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, submersible water heater, or UTH (under tank heating element). They are susceptible to health and husbandry related issues if water temperatures are too cold or too warm for these unusual amphibians. 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; Eastern newts are largely opportunistic eaters in the wild, feeding on a variety of aquatic to terrestrial insects, small arthropods, crustaceans, worms, small fish and fish eggs, a wide range of arthropods, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. Food items that are readily accepted by these amphibians in captivity can include earthworms, waxworms, bloodworms, small feeder crickets and roaches, silkworms, or other feeder insects as well as some commercially available diets. Recommended feeding is two to three times weekly. Feeder insects should also be gut loaded and dusted with additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplements as well prior to feeding to ensure optimal nutrition and health. 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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As with most amphibians, eastern newts are fragile animals, and handling should be done carefully or avoided and kept to a minimum whenever possible. Eastern newts, particularly the terrestrial efts, can secrete a noxious and unpleasant tasting tetrodotoxin when ingested or roughly handled. Although the eastern newt's/eft's toxins are typically not medically significant or life threatening to humans or pets when compared to that of some other more highly toxic newt species found elsewhere in the world, at least some level of care should still be kept in mind when handling them. Ideally, an aquarium net of appropriate size can be used to move aquatic caudates whenever 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.

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