



*Raija Hansen

Marbled Salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*)

Marbled and Marvelous

The marbled salamander is a small to medium sized, heavy bodied ambystomid salamander belonging to the family of salamanders known as the mole salamanders. As this group name implies, marbled salamanders are quite a fossorial and nocturnal salamander, and spend much of their time under the cover of rocks, logs, leaf litter, and other debris and ground cover. They are most often seen and encountered during rainy, humid, wet weather as they move overland to or from their breeding ponds and wetlands during the spring and fall. Marbled salamanders can be identified by their relatively short, stocky, and chubby bodies with ground color ranging from blackish to dark brown, with several lighter white to silver crossbands on their dorsum. Marbled salamanders are also sexually dimorphic, with females and newly transformed salamanders having duller coloration than adult males.

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 opacum**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Marbled salamanders are beautiful and unique salamanders that can be expected to attain captive longevity of up to 5 years or potentially more with the correct care.

Distribution and Habitat

Marbled salamanders occur in the southeastern and eastern United States in low lying floodplain wetlands, swamplands, to drier woodlands, forests, and wooded hillsides. They require temporary, vernal ponds and wetlands for breeding and reproduction.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

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Legal and Regulatory Status (*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Marbled salamanders typically range from 3 to 4 ½ inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. A single adult marbled salamander can be housed in a 10 gallon aquarium or other enclosure 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

Marbled 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; Marbled 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, marbled salamanders have voracious appetites, but should not be overfed in order to prevent obesity and other health related concerns. Providing variety is important, and marbled salamanders can be fed chemical and pesticide free earthworms, waxworms, silkworms, crickets, or roaches. Small, pre-killed rodents can also be given on occasion, but give these sparingly, if at all. No additional vitamin, mineral, or nutrient supplements are required to maintain marbled 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

Marbled 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 marbled 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

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