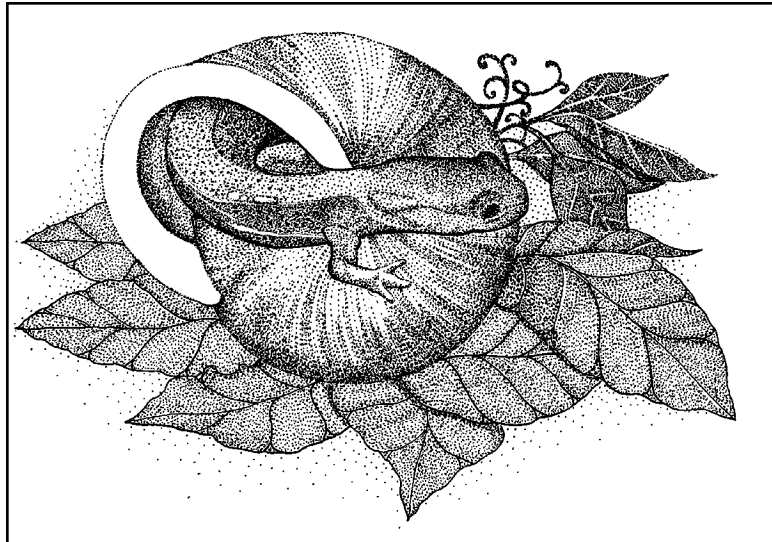
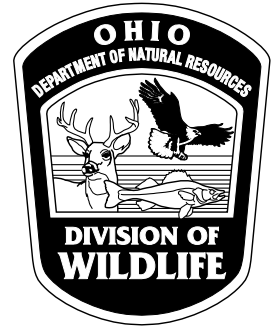


Redback Salamander

Scientific Name: *Plethodon cinereus*



Publication 329
(1099)

Introduction

In Ohio, the number of salamander species (24) exceeds that of frogs and toads combined. One of these species is among the smallest woodland creatures in Ohio. Because of its size, secretive behavior, and lack of vocalizations, the redback salamander is one of the most inconspicuous wildlife residents of the state.

Description

The redback salamander can actually be one of two colors: "redback" and "leadback." In its redback phase it has a reddish stripe that runs down its back from the base of its head to the tail. In the leadback phase, the salamander is uniformly dark gray to black. There are also redback salamanders with a color somewhere between that of the two primary phases.

Typically, the redback is found in beech-maple forests where cool and moist conditions prevail. Its range extends from southeast Canada into the northeast United States. In Ohio it is found almost entirely in the glaciated portions of the state.

Habitat and Habits

Redback salamanders are also found in rocky areas, especially slopes of rocky debris. They are a nocturnal species, active only at night. One of the behaviors this salamander is known for is its spring migration to breeding ponds. Following a warm spring rain, redbacks come out of their hibernation and "migrate" to

ponds where they will breed. This can be a risky undertaking as many routes require the small, slow-moving salamander to cross busy roads. In areas managed by the Cleveland Metropark District, roads are closed to help safeguard these animals during this critical period in their life cycle.

The redback salamander has an interesting way of defending itself. Their tails will break off easily and continue to wiggle, keeping the attention of predators while the salamander makes its escape. The tail will regenerate over time.

Reproduction and Care of Young

Redback salamanders reach sexual maturity at two years. They are polygamous, meaning that males will mate with more than one female. Breeding occurs in June and July. Three to 14 eggs are laid in a nest under a log and incubation takes six to eight weeks. The female stays with this nest and will defend it aggressively. The young redbacks will be able to leave the nest at about four weeks of age.

Female redback salamanders have two egg laying cycles: annual and biennial. Egg laying extends from June to July each year.

Management Plans

To help maintain redback salamander populations in the state, the Division of Wildlife focuses on the purchase and preservation of critical breeding grounds and habitat. Additionally, the taking of reptiles and amphibians on Division controlled lands is prohibited.



Viewing Opportunities

With some effort, you can find redback salamanders under rocks and logs in a cool woodland. Should you look for redback salamanders in these locations gently raise and lower cover. Don't destroy habitat by ripping up and removing rotten logs. Another opportunity to see these animals exists when the salamanders make their way to breeding ponds on a warm and rainy spring evening.

Do Something Wild!

Redback salamanders are among the majority of wildlife species in the state that are not taken as game. They are an important part of our overall ecosystem and contribute to the wildlife diversity of the state. Helping us to manage and research these species are the generous citizens of the state of Ohio. With money they either donated through the state income tax checkoff, the purchase of wildlife conserva-

tion license plates, or their direct contribution to the Endangered Species Special Account, the Division is able to purchase critical habitat essential to sustaining species like the redback salamander and provide education materials and opportunities on wildlife to children and adults.

Contributions to our Endangered Species and Wildlife Diversity Program are accepted throughout the year. To make a donation, please send a check to: Endangered Species Special Account, Ohio Division of Wildlife, 2045 Morse Road, Bldg. G, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693. All contributions, whether made on your income tax return or directly, are tax deductible.

At a Glance

Mating: Polygamous

Peak of Breeding Activity: June and July

Incubation Period: 6-8 weeks

Young Hatch: July and August

Number of Eggs: 3-14

Eggs Produced: Once a year

Adult Length: 2.25-4 inches

Life Expectancy: Unknown

Migration Patterns: Year-round resident, hibernates in the winter

Feeding Periods: A nocturnal species - - eating, movement and other vital activities occur at night.

Typical Foods: Ants, beetles, caterpillars, earthworms, snails, and grasshoppers

Native to Ohio: Yes

