



SALAMANDER SEARCHING



In-A-Nutshell: Children adventure into the habitat and special lives of secretive salamanders by gently searching under logs, stones, and alongside creeks, for evidence of different species of salamanders. Further discoveries can be made through additional activities that deepen one’s knowledge, empathy, and wonder about these fantastic animals.

So what’s a salamander anyway?

Salamanders are amphibians with moist skin. Some amphibians breathe and drink through their skin! Amphibians are vertebrates, meaning they have a backbone. The name amphibian means “two lives” because they begin their life in the water as eggs. Developing salamanders are known as larva, tadpoles or salamanderlings. They have gills at first, and then eventually emerge on land as adults without gills. (Salamanders have a few exceptions, like a spotted newt who returns to the water after it’s red eft stage and regrows gills!). Salamanders go through incomplete metamorphosis: in other words, they go through big changes as they develop, but not as much as a butterfly.

Habitat and how to search safely (for both you and the salamanders)

Salamanders need to keep their skin moist, so you won’t find them out sunning themselves on a rock. But they are ectothermic (meaning they get their warmth from their surroundings) so you also rarely find them in winter time. Favorite spots for salamander searching include creek sides, woodlands, underneath things (like woodpiles, damp areas, logs, and such). Always be careful that where you are searching is safe and free of hazards. When lifting up a rock or log to peek for a salamander it’s good to have a helper. Keep your hands clean and don’t handle a salamander for more than a minute or so – our skin is full of oils, lotions and more, that can harm their delicate skin. Take a picture and put your salamander back where you found it, or beside the rock so they can crawl safely back underneath.

Salamander ID [salamanders of NYS](#) (this is a Department of Environmental Conservation flyer on their ny.gov website! You can also order one by mail)

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation_hudson_pdf/salamanderb.pdf

Enrichment Activities

- Make a salamander out of clay. Does yours have spots?
- Create a salamander habitat in a plastic tray using bits of rotting logs, soil, rocks, moss and sticks
- Life cycle coloring sheet (attached below)
- Read or watch a reading on YouTube, *The Salamander Room* by Ann Mazer. Here is a good YouTube link to the story: [The Salamander Room reading](#) . Discuss what a salamander needs to live.
- What do salamander larvae eat? Collect pond water to look at with a strong hand lens or microscope to investigate the microorganisms, like daphnia and protozoa, important to salamander larvae.



Photo credit: amphibianfact.com

Life Cycle of a Salamander

