



Self-Guided Amphibian Discovery Walks

Spring is when nature begins waking up after a long winter. Amphibians are some of the early risers with many awakening during the first warm rainy periods. Even terrestrial amphibians return to water to mate—traveling to seasonal ponds called vernal (spring) pools. Vernal pools make excellent places for amphibian egg laying because they dry up in the summer. This prevents fish (primary predators) from living in them. Wetlands and permanent ponds are also great spots to look for amphibians, particularly frogs. Lake Metroparks has many parks with these habitats for you to find all kinds of amphibians!

Penitentiary Glen Reservation

The man-made vernal pool along Gorge Rim Loop is a great home for breeding spotted and Jefferson salamanders as well as red-spotted newts. Although also home to fish, the other ponds and wetlands in the park provide breeding grounds for spring peepers, wood frogs, and more. Check shallow areas for egg masses, usually stuck to submerged tree branches. Look in the Nature Play pond in April and May for breeding American toads and bullfrogs.

Gully Brook Park

Spotted and Jefferson salamanders can be seen on warm rainy spring nights making their way to one of the many vernal pools found throughout the floodplain of Gully Brook. But be careful! During peak salamander migration, many salamanders can be seen crossing the parking lot!

Hogback Ridge Park

Hogback Ridge Park is home to many salamanders and frogs. It has suitable habitat in both upland and lowland areas making it possible to see not only spotted and Jefferson salamanders but small-mouthed salamanders as well. Don't forget to explore the area along Mill Creek for green frogs and be sure to flip wet logs and rocks to find any critters hiding there!

Indian Point Park

Both the upper and lower areas of Indian Point Park have good amphibian habitat. Check the pond near the upper parking lot for amphibians such as green frogs and spring peepers, then head down to the floodplain along Paine Creek to find vernal pools scattered throughout the forest.

Girdled Road Reservation

Amphibians can be seen in and around the numerous ponds throughout this 940+ acre park. Spring peepers, wood frogs, and green frogs are abundant here in early to mid spring while late spring sees increased activity of American toads and bullfrogs. Flip logs to see if you can find any wood frogs or slimy salamanders.

Girdled Road Reservation

North Entrance
12840 Girdled Rd.

South Entrance
12926 Radcliffe Rd.

Skok Meadow
12415 Concord Hambden Rd.
Concord Twp., Ohio 44077

- Surveyor's Woods Loop Trail
- Skok Meadow Loop Trail
- Oak Leaf Loop Trail
- Green Darner Trail

Gully Brook Park

2100 River Rd.
Willoughby Hills, Ohio 44094

- Gully Brook Valley Trail

Hogback Ridge Park

4700 Emerson Rd.
Madison Twp., Ohio 44057

- Meadow Rim Trail
- Hemlock Ridge Loop Trail
- Bluebell Valley Path

Indian Point Park

Paine Creek parking lot
12951 Seeley Rd.

Upper parking lot
13165 Seeley Rd.
Leroy Twp., Ohio 44077

- Little Pond Loop Trail
- Paine Creek Trail

Penitentiary Glen Reservation

8668 Kirtland-Chardon Rd.
Kirtland, Ohio 44094

- Gorge Rim Loop Trail
- Glen Meadow Loop Trail
- Halle Home Trail



Wood frog

Wood frogs are small frogs of woodland areas. They breed in wetlands and vernal pools in the spring. They are easily identified by the dark “mask” across their eyes. They range in color from brown to pinkish. Wood frogs average 1.5 to 2.75 inches in length.



Spotted salamander

Spotted salamanders are easily identified by their chunky dark gray bodies and bright yellow spots. Spotted salamanders migrate to vernal pools in large numbers and are seldom seen during the day. They range from about 6 to 8 inches in length and are the state amphibian of Ohio!



Jefferson salamander

Jefferson salamanders look similar to spotted salamanders without the spots. Jefferson salamanders have small blueish specks along their sides, which are more noticeable on younger individuals. Jefferson salamanders average 4.5 to 7 inches in length.



Small-mouthed salamander

To the untrained eye, **small-mouthed salamanders** look very similar to the Jefferson. Note the smaller, narrow head and small mouth. Small-mouthed salamanders can be found in the same places as Jefferson salamanders so keep a sharp eye out. They average 4.5 to 7.5 inches.



Northern slimy salamander

Northern slimy salamanders are lungless salamanders, absorbing oxygen through their skin. As such, they prefer damp to wet areas and are often seen under rotting logs. These salamanders are black with small silvery spots and range from 5 to 7 inches in length.



Northern red salamander

Northern red salamanders are appropriately named as they range in color from bright red to bright orange and are covered by small black spots. Another lungless salamander, look for them under logs and near cold clear streams. They range from 4 to 6 inches in length.



Spring peeper

Spring peepers are often heard more than seen. These tiny frogs are known for their loud “peeping” calls and dozens can be found surrounding a single small pond during spring. They are in the treefrog family and are light warm brown with a darker brown “x” marking on their backs. They are 0.75 to 1.25 inches in length.



Northern green frog

Northern green frogs are the most abundant frog in Ohio. They can be found in vernal pools and large ponds and look similar to bullfrogs. They are identified by a ridge going down each side of their bodies. Green frogs are 2 to 3.5 inches in length.



Red-spotted newt



Red eft

Red-spotted newts live an interesting life. Born in wetlands and vernal pools, they spend their “teenage years” as bright orange terrestrial animals called **red efts**. They then return to the water where they turn an olive-yellow and live out the rest of their lives underwater. They have identifiable red spots with black outlines in all forms and average 3 to 4 inches in length.

Amphibians can be found in dark wet areas. Vernal pools are great spots, but don't forget to flip logs or even check under rocks near streams.

Remember that most amphibians need to stay wet. If you handle them, make sure your hands are wet and clean (free of lotions and other chemicals). Be gentle, as these animals are delicate. Hold them near the ground so if they escape your grasp, they don't have far to fall.