

# Reptiles and Amphibians at The Dawes Arboretum

## Snakes

Northern Water Snake (*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*)  
Eastern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*)  
Eastern Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum triangulum*)  
Midland Rat Snake (*Pantherophis spiloides*)  
Northern Ringneck Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*)

Snakes at The Dawes Arboretum are elusive and many times over looked. The most common snake is the northern water snake, which is often seen basking in the Cypress Swamp, or at the Education and Japanese Garden ponds. If scared, it will quickly retreat to the water, often surfacing away from the banks. Milk snakes and rat snakes may both be seen around barns and buildings on and around grounds where rodents are more common. Other places to look include under logs and rocks where they retreat from the mid-day sun. Garter snakes may also be found in this manner, but many times prefer a moister habitat than milk and rat snakes.



Eastern Garter Snake

Ringneck snakes are rarely encountered at the arboretum due to their elusive nature, as well as their ability to burrow. This species is most often seen at night when they emerge from underneath logs, leaves, stones, and other objects to feed.

## Turtles

Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina*)  
Midland Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta marginata*)  
Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta*)  
Common Musk Turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*)  
Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle (*Apalone spinifera*)  
Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)



Painted turtles basking at the Education Pond



Red-eared slider in the Japanese Garden Pond

Many of the turtles can be seen at the various bodies of water on main grounds at the Arboretum (i.e. Dawes Lake, Japanese garden pond, and education pond). Painted turtles and red-eared slider are often seen basking on the banks or rocks located around water. Although they may appear similar, painted turtles and red-eared sliders can be discerned by the presence or absence of a large red mark on the head. Spiny soft shell turtle may also be seen basking, but are more often in the middle of the body of water with just their head above water although the body can also be seen below the surface. Snapping turtles are large bodied and are most often seen at the surface of the water, although movement will send them back to the depths.

Box turtles are rarely encountered except after heavy rains where many turtles may be seen at once. More often you will find box turtles under rotting logs, leaves, or other debris. Good places to look for box turtles are the East Side and the Deep Woods.

## Frogs and Toads

### True Frogs:

Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*)

Green Frog (*Rana clamitans clamitans*)

Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)

Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*)

### Treefrogs and Chorus Frogs:

Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*)

Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*)

Northern Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer crucifer*)

### Toads:

Eastern American Toad (*Bufo americanus americanus*)

Fowler's Toad (*Bufo fowleri*)

Bullfrog at the  
Education Pond



Eastern American toad near the Education Center

Frogs and toads are very common at The Dawes Arboretum, although they are more often heard than seen. Both frogs and toads are most frequently encountered in and around water, however, there are exceptions. Except when breeding and emerging after metamorphosis, tree frogs, including gray, western chorus, and spring peepers are rarely seen, but often heard. All tree frogs have round toe pads used for adhesion to surfaces and climbing. Wood frogs use the vernal pools at Dawes when breeding but return to the woodlands and streams where only careful searching will reveal the rare specimen, easily identified by the black mask over each eye.

Even though toads are most common around water, they may also hop across your path (quite literally) almost anywhere else on grounds. In fact, at least one has taken up residence in a garage on site. Leopard frogs are also encountered away from the safety of water, often in meadows, which is why they are also known as meadow or grass frogs.

The two most common frogs at The Dawes Arboretum, and probably in Ohio, are the bullfrog and the green frog. These two frogs thrive in almost any permanent or semi-permanent body of water and calls are heard all day but increase in frequency at dusk. Green frogs can be identified by their banjo-like call and the lateral folds running parallel down their back. Bullfrogs, on the other hand, have an L-shaped ridge around the tympanic membrane.

## Salamanders

### Mole Salamanders:

Jefferson's Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*)

Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*)

Smallmouth Salamander (*Ambystoma texanum*)

### Lungless Salamanders:

Northern Dusky Salamander (*Desmognathus fuscus*)

Redback Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*)

Northern Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon glutinosus*)

Northern Red Salamander (*Pseudotriton ruber ruber*)

Northern Two-lined Salamander (*Eurycea bislineata*)

Longtail Salamander (*Eurecea longicauda*)



Green frog in the bird watching garden

Salamanders may resemble small, slimy lizards, but are in fact amphibians that inhabit many moist environments including woodlands, streams, vernal pools, and ponds. At the Arboretum, salamanders are found in the Cypress Swamp (a vernal pool), the Red Maple Woods on the Davis Farm, and the Gorge Property in Quarry Run. Herpetologists divide salamanders into two families, mole salamanders (Ambystomids) and lungless salamanders (Plethodontids). Lungless salamanders, as the name states, lack lungs and instead breathe through their skin and the lining of their mouths. This means that the skin must always remain moist or the salamander will suffocate, which is why they are typically found near streams and permanent bodies of water. Mole salamanders, on the other hand, have lungs and are often found in woodlands, hiding under leaf litter, rocks, and logs. In the early spring, they migrate to the pool where they were born and breed.

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