

This brochure will help you to understand what amphibians and reptiles are; why they need our help; and what you can do to create a reptile and amphibian friendly backyard.

Just as you can attract birds by putting out bird feeders and butterflies by planting a butterfly garden, you can also make your property a welcoming habitat for many of our amphibians and reptiles.



Our Mascot, the Blanding's Turtle

What risks do amphibians and reptiles face? How can you help?

Amphibians and reptiles are important parts of our ecosystem.

They eat large numbers of mosquitoes, other insects, and rodent pests. They can be a valuable food source for other wildlife. Urban development and pollution can cause their habitats to be lost or degraded. But, you can help. Your backyard can provide important wildlife habitat.

By following a few simple suggestions, you can improve the quality of your property for all of our amphibian and reptile friends.

In the process you will help yourself too, as amphibians and reptiles actually make great neighbors.



A Wood Frog

How You Can Help . . .

Enjoy wildlife where you find it – Keeping wildlife as pets prevents them from reproducing, which is important for survival of wildlife populations in your area. It also may be against local wildlife laws and regulations.

Don't move wildlife – Wildlife encountered in your backyard are at home; this is where they live. Moving an animal to somewhere "better" (like a pond, park, or forest) can leave it vulnerable to predators and make searching for food more difficult. Amphibians and reptiles that are moved also may be killed crossing roads as they try to return to familiar areas.

Don't turn it loose – Don't release plants and animals from your home to the outdoors. This includes aquarium plants and animals. These living things can introduce diseases or become problems as they compete with and prey upon native wildlife and plants.



A Ribbon Snake

Minimize pesticide use – Amphibians are particularly vulnerable to pesticides. Their skin allows not only water and oxygen to be absorbed directly into their body, but harmful chemicals too.

Minimize fertilizer use – Excess fertilizer can run off into nearby water bodies (ponds, streams, rivers) where it may cause harm and even death to aquatic creatures.

Plant native species – Plants adapted to live in your local area need less maintenance than those originally from other areas. Native plants are often hardier and require less water, fertilizer, and pesticide use.



A Natural Landscape

Enhance habitat – Including different habitat types in your yard will give wildlife more spaces to use. Landscape your yard using a variety of native shrubs and trees. Let leaves stay where they fall on all or part of your property and provide logs, rocks, and brush piles of branches and twigs as shelter.

Maintain backyard ponds in natural state – Ponds can be important breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders, but only if large predatory fish that feed on eggs and young are not present. Keep or plant native vegetation around a pond's border as it is important shelter for tadpoles and small frogs.



Painted Turtle & Blanding's Turtle

What are amphibians and reptiles?

Like birds and mammals, amphibians and reptiles are vertebrates, meaning that they have a backbone. Unlike birds and mammals, their body temperatures can vary greatly, based on their surroundings.

Amphibians

include frogs, toads, newts and salamanders. Many have complex life cycles that involve living on land and in water. While



Yellow Spotted Salamander

most adult amphibians have lungs, they also breathe through their skin, which must stay moist to allow oxygen to pass through.

Reptiles

include turtles, snakes, and lizards. Most reptiles that you encounter in your backyard are terrestrial, spending most of their life on land. They breathe only through their lungs and have dry scaly skin.



Spotted Turtle



DID YOU KNOW ...



Turtles can live for 75 years or longer!

Some snakes lay eggs, but others give birth to their young!

Salamanders can live for 10 to 15 years!

Amphibians and reptiles hibernate!

Turtles never leave their shells!



BLANDINGS PARK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Biddeford ME 04005

Please write to us at bpws@maine.rr.com

Ask for our 12 page introductory booklet or for more information on how you can join and become a part of this great new asset.



To learn more about these critters

visit the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation website and see their Habitat Management Guidelines for more detailed information about improving your backyard habitat at www.parcplace.org

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Your Backyard

Guide:

Helping

Amphibians and

Reptiles



Blandings Park Wildlife Sanctuary Biddeford ME

A grassroots 501 © 3 land trust created and dedicated to preserve and protect all species through conservation, education, recreation, and research for the betterment of all.

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