

# Amphibians of Clark County

Amphibians (including frogs, salamanders and toads) are “cold-blooded” vertebrates that typically spend part of their lives in a body of water and part of it on land. Amphibians can be found in wetlands, streams, forests, and even urban areas. A few species of salamanders in Clark County live fully on land, spending their entire lives in moist logs and forest floors. Most species of amphibians spend a portion of their lives in water, which makes them vulnerable to being harmed by pollutants in **stormwater**. Stormwater can carry pollutants like heavy metals, sediment, pesticides, and fertilizers to our local waterways. Taking actions to keep our stormwater clean and create amphibian friendly habitat helps improve our environment and keep our amphibians safe.

**Stormwater** is all the water that falls from the sky, like rain or snow. When it rains, stormwater picks up whatever it touches, like oil from roads, yard chemicals, and pet waste. These pollutants are harmful to amphibians.

## Common Amphibian Species of Clark County



**Ensatina**  
*Ensatina eschscholtzii*

Ensatinas are one of the most common terrestrial salamanders. They can be found in moist forest floors. They are most easily recognized by their large eyes and peach color on the upper surface of their legs.



**Long-toed Salamander**  
*Ambystoma macrodactylum*

This aquatic salamander is named for the long fourth toe on its back feet. While they use most pond types, they prefer seasonal ponds less than 0.5m deep, with sticks and vegetation to attach egg masses and hide in.



**Northwestern Salamander**  
*Ambystoma gracile*

An aquatic salamander known for its firm egg mass and dark color. Look for them in the spring in partially wooded ponds deeper than 0.5m.



**Rough Skinned Newt**  
*Taricha granulosa*

Identified by its orange belly and “rough skin,” this aquatic salamander typically lays its eggs in 0.5-2m deep ponds ranging from forested to developed. Look for them along paths near water in the spring.



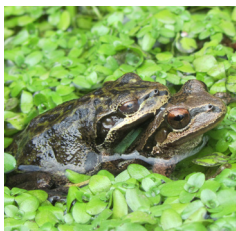
**Western Red-backed Salamander**  
*Plethodon vehiculum*

A common terrestrial salamander identified by the yellow to red color found along its back, extending to the tip of its tail and along the tops of its legs. It is most often found in logs and woody debris.



**Northern Red-legged Frog**  
*Rana aurora*

This species can be identified by a cream colored “mustache” and bright red legs. They are found in dead plant material (called **duff**) around ponds and typically breed in ponds 0.5-2m deep.



**Pacific Tree Frog (Chorus Frog)**  
*Pseudacris regilla*

Known for their spring vocalizations. They have a variety of colors, but are most recognizable by the black mask on their faces. They are an adaptable amphibian found in a variety of habitats.



**American Bullfrog**  
*Lithobates catesbeianus*

Bullfrogs are native to the eastern United States. They are identified by their large size, large eardrums, green to brown color with cream belly. They breed in the summer in warm perennial ponds.

### Table Legend:

**Green Box:** Terrestrial (land dwelling) Species

**Blue Box:** Pond Breeding Species

**Red Outline:** Invasive species

### Other Species found in Clark County:

Cascade Torrent Salamander (*Rhyacotriton cascadae*), Cope's Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon copei*), Coastal Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon tenebrosus*), Coastal Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*), Larch Mountain Salamander (*Plethodon larselli*), Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*)

**If you find an egg mass, frog, or salamander—leave it be!** Don't purchase or move critters into your backyard. Instead, **create the habitat and they will come.**

# Creating Habitat for Amphibians

Whether you have a stormwater facility, a pond, a stream, or none of the above in your backyard, you can improve the amphibian habitat on your property by providing the basics: a water source, shelter, and food. You should also consider the needs of each life stage (egg masses, tadpoles, and adults), and provide habitat and protection both in and out of the water.

## Wetland Habitat

Whether you have a large wetland or a small backyard pond, you can create amphibian habitat in your yard. Providing a water source is a great way to see egg masses and amphibians throughout the year. You can enhance your wetland habitat by:

- Planting emergent vegetation in and around ponds. Emergent plants grow partially submerged in shallow areas along the edges of ponds and wetlands.
- Adding sticks and logs in and around your pond. These provide areas for amphibians to attach egg masses and to hide from predators.
- Not adding fish or bullfrogs to your pond. These animals eat native amphibians.



*Egg masses are typically found in wetland habitats from Jan. to March.*

## Stormwater Facilities

Stormwater facilities capture and clean stormwater where it falls. While stormwater facilities might not seem like a place to find amphibians, many do provide habitat for them. If you have a stormwater pond with amphibians, you can protect them by:



- Placing downed wood around the pond perimeter.
- Providing vegetative corridors between the pond and the nearest tree stand.
- Maintaining pond vegetation that covers 25-75% of the pond's surface.
- Scheduling maintenance between July and December when amphibians aren't present.
- Visiting [stormwaterpartners.com](http://stormwaterpartners.com) to learn more about maintaining stormwater facilities.

## Upland Habitat

When we think of amphibians, we often think of ponds. However, we often forget about the importance of upland habitats adjacent to ponds. Amphibians use these areas to overwinter, migrate, and hide from predators. You can provide quality upland habitat by:

- Reducing chemical use.
- Planting shrubs and trees around your pond.
- Avoid mowing adjacent to the pond. Keep grass 3-4 in. tall
- Creating bush piles from rocks, bricks, or logs.



### Remember, you can protect native amphibians by:

- Protecting existing wetlands.
- Creating diverse habitat types in your backyard.
- Maintaining connections between habitat types.
- Maintaining vegetation buffers around bodies of water.
- Leaving downed logs and debris.
- Reducing use of pesticides, fertilizers, & other chemicals.
- Not dumping chemicals or oils down storm drains.
- Keeping cars well maintained and leak free.

## For more information

To learn more about how to protect our native amphibians and their habitats visit [clarkcd.org/amphibian](http://clarkcd.org/amphibian).

To learn more about how to reduce your impact on our waterways visit [clarkcd.org/watershedstewards](http://clarkcd.org/watershedstewards).

