

# *Turtles and Amphibians of Windy Acres*

Windy Acres is home to many different reptiles and amphibians. Only a few have been identified to date, which are included within this presentation. A few of these species are on the threatened or endangered list. We hope that as you explore Windy Acres, you will encounter more species. Take a picture and send it to us and we will add it to our inventory!

Most turtles and amphibians live in wetland and aquatic environments. The South Branch of the Rockaway Creek and its tributaries flows across the northern, western and eastern parts of Windy Acres Nature Preserve. The South Branch Rockaway Creek provides exceptional habitat for these creatures. It is important to keep Windy Acres clean so that these creatures can continue to thrive, including the turtle that saved Windy Acres!



# The Turtle That Saved Windy Acres

The Wood Turtle is listed by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection as a **Threatened Species**. Wood Turtles were found near the South Branch of the Rockaway Creek on the Windy Acres land tract. This finding was the primary rationale for reclassifying the creek from C2 to C1, which effectively stopped the proposed 911 unit housing development that had been slated for this area.

# *Turtles*

Turtles are reptiles and have been on this earth for 15 million years. They are characterized by a specialized bony or cartilaginous shell developed from their ribs that acts as a shield. Turtles typical life span is 50 years, but they can live much longer. Common predators are mammals like skunks, raccoons, and rodents, as well as birds like crows and ravens.

Turtles found at Windy Acres, which include wood turtles and box turtles, generally live in wooded and grassland environments close to a water source. Turtles will hibernate during the winter months. Turtles are omnivores and eat insects, fruits, and leafy greens.

# Wood Turtle

(*Glyptemys insculpta*)

## State Threatened Species

**Identification:** 5 1/2" - 8". The shell of the wood turtle is very rough and looks sculpted in appearance. Each scute of the carapace is in the form of an irregular pyramid rising upward in a series of concentric grooves and ridges. Parts of the neck and limbs of the wood turtle have reddish-orange coloration.

**Where to find them:** This turtle is a riparian species that uses a mosaic of wetland and upland habitats in the vicinity of its stream habitat. The wood turtle requires clean streams running through meadows, woods, and farmlands. While wood turtles are typically found in or near their home waters, they frequently wander far afield. They will rest in the shade of vegetation, fallen logs, or debris.

**When to find them:** Active late March or early April through October. Active mostly in morning and late afternoon/evening, but may also be out during midday.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)



# Eastern Box Turtle

(Terrapene Carolina Carolina)

**Identification** : 4 1/2" - 6". The box turtle is a terrestrial species with a tall, domelike shell which is hinged at the bottom, allowing the turtle to retract its head and legs and close its shell completely to protect itself. The shell varies in color from yellow to orange to olive on a black or brown background. Box turtles have four toes on each hind foot. Males have a central concave area in the rear lobe of the plastron and their eyes are sometimes red. Young Eastern Box Turtles are much duller than the adults; they are typically a dull brown, but with a spot of yellow on each large scute of the carapace.

**Where to find them**: Although essentially terrestrial, these turtles sometimes soak themselves in mud or water. During hot, dry weather they burrow beneath logs or rotting vegetation, but brief summer showers usually bring them out of hiding, often in numbers.

**When to find them**: Active April through September.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)



# *Amphibians*

Amphibians are small vertebrates that need water or moisture environments to live. They breathe and absorb water through their very thin skin. They start out as larvae living in water with gills (tadpoles) and grow legs, adapt to air breathing during their life cycle and vary from aquatic to terrestrial living in the adult stage. They lay their eggs in water.

Amphibians found at Windy Acres include salamanders, frogs, and toads. Salamanders are typically characterized by a lizard-like appearance with slender bodies, blunt snouts, short limbs, and the presence of a tail in both larvae and adults. Salamanders are able to regenerate lost limbs. Adults frogs and toads have a stout body, protruding eyes, long tongues, limbs folded underneath and no tail. The difference between frogs and toads are that frogs have legs longer than their head and body which are made for hopping. Toads have shorter legs that prefer to crawl rather than hop. Frogs have smooth, sometimes slimy skin and toads have dry, warty skin.

# *Blue-Spotted Salamander*

(*Ambystoma Laterale*)

## **State Endangered Species**

**Identification:** 4" - 5 1/2". The background of the Blue-spotted Salamander is a bluish black color and it is sprinkled with flecks of blue and white. Its spots are on its back, as well as its sides and tail. The area around its vent is usually black. This salamander does have relatively long toes.

**Where to find them:** Blue-spotted Salamanders breed in woodland ponds, marshes, swamps, and ditches. Terrestrial adults are found in mature woods where there are rotting logs and deep humus, slightly above swamps and marshland level.

**When to find them:** Breeds in late March and early April. Enter hibernation before freezing temperatures.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)



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# *Four Toed Salamander*

(*Hemidactylium Scutatum*)

**Identification:** 2" - 4". The Four-toed Salamander has a brown back and gray sides, with dark speckles on the back and sides. It has three key identifying characteristics. First, both the hind feet and the front feet have four toes whereas most salamanders have five toes on each hind foot. Second, its underside is white with black spots. Third, it has a constriction at the base of the tail that marks where the tail can break off.

**Where to find them:** Wooded swamps and fens featuring a thick carpet of sphagnum moss.

**When to find them:** Active April through September.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)





# Northern Two-lined Salamander

(*Eurycea Bislineata*)

**Identification:** 2 1/2" - 3 3/4". The Northern Two-lined Salamander is one of two yellowish salamanders in New Jersey. This species is more common. Two dark lines run the length of the salamander's body with a light middorsal stripe in between. The dark stripes tend to break up into dots or dashes at the tail. The salamander is essentially yellow, although some individuals may vary. There are typically small black spots in the light middorsal stripe. In adults, the tail can be up to almost two-thirds of their length.

**Where to find them:** Northern Two-lined Salamanders are typically found under rocks and logs at water's edge, or near springs or seepage areas, and will run or swim away vigorously if alarmed. In warm, wet weather, the Northern Two-lined Salamander may wander far from water into the woodlands.

**When to find them:** All year round.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)



# Northern Green Frog

(*Lithobates clamitans melanota*)

**Identification:** 2 1/8" - 4". Despite the name, the ground color can range from green to brown; darker spots maybe seen on the back. The belly is generally white, commonly with some spots under legs and head. The adult male has a bright yellow throat; the female has a white throat. The male's tympanum (eardrum) is larger than the eye; the female's is the same size as the eye or smaller. Dorsolateral ridges help distinguish the Green Frog from the Bullfrog: in the Green Frog, the ridges extend down the body, ending before the groin, while in the Bullfrog these ridges are absent.

**Where to find them:** May be found in any body of fresh water, but are most commonly observed in permanent bodies of water.

**When to find them:** Breeds April through August.

**Voice:** A twang like a banjo string or a plucked rubber band. If repeated, subsequent calls are quieter. Young Green Frogs issue an alarm call when frightened—a high-pitched peep—as they jump into the water.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)



# Eastern American Toad

(*Bufo Americanus Americanus*)

**Identification:** 2"- 4 3/8". Although this toad is common in the Northern Region of the state, it is easily confused with the Fowler's Toad. Coloration is variable, with patterns of warts, spots and blotches. The ground color is earth-toned, ranging from olive to brown to brick red, with blotches of lighter or darker colors; warts are lighter or darker shades of yellowish, reddish or brown. The chest usually has darker spots. There may be a light line running down the center of the back. The warts on the lower portion of the hind leg are enlarged. The American Toad is distinguished from the Fowler's Toad by the number of warts in the largest blotches: the American Toad has no more than two warts per blotch (compare to the Fowler's toad, below). The location of parotoid (shoulder) glands also distinguishes the American Toad from other species of toad: in the American Toad, the parotoid glands do not contact the ridge behind the eyes; however, a short spur may span the gap between gland and ridge.

**Where to find them:** This species can be found anywhere from backyards to remote woodlands. This toad breeds in shallow bodies of water, including vernal pools, the shallow edges of streams, and permanent ponds.

**When to find them:** Active March through late September. Breeds from March to June.

**Voice:** Long, musical trill, lasting up to thirty seconds.

(NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002)

