

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bombay Hook

National Wildlife Refuge

Amphibians and Reptiles

Introduction

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge comprises 16,251 acres, approximately three-quarters of which is tidal salt marsh. It also includes freshwater impoundments, brushy and timbered swamps, and upland habitats. The general terrain is flat and less than ten feet above sea level. The variety of habitats within Bombay Hook Refuge provides the essential living requirements for an interesting array of amphibians (salamanders, toads, and frogs) and reptiles (turtles, snakes and lizards).

Many of these kinds of animals are often overlooked by visitors. They are hard to see; however, closer scrutiny may expose a “clump of moss” as a frog or “part of a vine” to be a snake. A slight movement on their part as you approach may be the giveaway. The frogs and toads can also be identified by their voices which ring out in loud chorus during spring nights, and into the summer.

AMPHIBIANS

Salamanders

Redback Salamander <i>(Plethodon cinereus)</i>	Common woodland salamander. Hides beneath logs, bark slabs and stones during the daytime. In this area, it is usually in the “lead” phase, that is, the reddish pigment is usually lacking. They mate in the fall and the female lays her eggs in the spring.
Marbled Salamander <i>(Ambystoma opacum)</i>	Fairly common. Found in woodland areas hiding under logs. A mole salamander, spending most of its life underground. Fall breeder.
Spotted Salamander <i>(Ambystoma maculatum)</i>	Uncommon. Found in woodland and pond areas. Hides beneath logs during the day. Recognized by bright yellow spots. Like marbled salamander, breeds in fishless pools. Early spring breeder.

Toads and Frogs

Fowler’s Toad <i>(Bufo woodhousii fowleri)</i>	Common in woodland and grassy areas. Has three or more warts in each dark spot unlike the American toad which has 1 or 2. Breeds in shallow temporary pools in warm months, usually May and June.
Northern Cricket Frog <i>(Acris c. crepitans)</i>	Common. Inhabits emergent and shoreside vegetation of freshwater pools. Call sounds like two marbles hitting together. Breeding usually occurs May through July.
Green Treefrog <i>(Hyla cinerea)</i>	Common in woodland areas adjacent to ponds. Seen particularly during spring. Visits windows at night, seeking insects attracted by light. Cowbell-like breeding call can be heard early to mid-summer.
Gray Treefrog <i>(Hyla versicolor)</i>	Uncommon. Forages aloft in small trees and shrubs near water. Breeds in quiet shallow waters.
Northern Spring Peeper <i>(Pseudacris c. crucifer)</i>	Common. Congregates and calls loudly in early spring where shrubs stand in shallow water. Breeds February through June.
New Jersey Chorus Frog <i>(Pseudacris triseriata kalmi)</i>	Common. Congregates during the spring in low vegetation along the edges of freshwater pools and ponds. Call is reminiscent of a finger going across a comb. Breeds February-June.
Bullfrog <i>(Rana catesbeiana)</i>	Common large frog of the freshwater pools. The familiar jug-o-rum call can be heard throughout the warm weather.
Green Frog <i>(Rana clamitans melanota)</i>	Inhabits the shallow freshwater of pools, ponds, and ditches. Its call sounds like a loose banjo string. Breeds April through August.
Southern Leopard Frog <i>(Rana u. utricularia)</i>	Common in shallow freshwater areas. Travels into grass fields, far from water, during the summer.
Pickerel Frog <i>(Rana palustris)</i>	Common. Inhabits shallow, freshwater areas. Travels into grass fields during the summer.
Wood Frog <i>(Rana sylvatica)</i>	Common. Should be looked for in shallow woodland pools during the early spring. One of the first frogs to call in spring. Gasping or clacking like call heard in early March.

REPTILES

Turtles

	Common Snapping Turtle (<i>Chelydra s. serpentina</i>)	Common in the freshwater pools, but also inhabits brackish and salt water. The largest nesting turtle in Delaware, it lays its eggs in the upland fields and dike road during the late spring.
	Common Musk Turtle (<i>Sternotherus odoratus</i>)	Common. Lives in the freshwater pools. May give off musky smell when handled, sometimes called stinkpot.
	Eastern Mud Turtle (<i>Kinosternon s. subrubrum</i>)	More common than the musk turtle which it resembles. Inhabits both fresh and brackish water.
	Spotted Turtle (<i>Clemmys guttata</i>)	Uncommon. Inhabits shallow freshwater in the pools, ponds and ditches. Most individuals have yellow or orange spots on shell.
	Eastern Box Turtle (<i>Terrapene c. carolina</i>)	Uncommon. This is a dry-land turtle most frequently seen in the woodlands. Feeds on slugs, worms and vegetation. May live to 80+ years.
	Eastern Painted Turtle (<i>Chrysemys p. picta</i>)	The most frequently seen turtle. Basks in the warm sunlight on logs, stumps and vegetated clumps in the freshwater pools.
	Redbelly Turtle (<i>Pseudemys rubriventris</i>)	Uncommon. Inhabits the freshwater pools. Basks like the painted turtle but is much larger. Feeds primarily on aquatic vegetation.
	Northern Diamondback Terrapin (<i>Malaclemys t. terrapin</i>)	Common estuarine species. Lives in unpolluted salt marsh and brackish water habitats. Lays eggs on the dikes or other accessible areas in early June to early July.

Lizards

	Five-lined Skink (<i>Eumeces fasciatus</i>)	Uncommon. Lives in cut-over woodlands that have rotting stumps and logs. Mainly terrestrial but can climb trees. Juveniles have bright blue tails. Adult males have reddish orange heads.
	Northern Fence Lizard (<i>Sceloporus undulatus hyacinthinus</i>)	Uncommon. Favors rotting logs and open woodlands. Seldom far from trees.

Snakes

	Northern Water Snake (<i>Nedrodia s. sipedon</i>)	Most commonly encountered snake on Refuge. Common in and about fresh and brackish water. Harmless, but will bite if provoked. Feeds on frogs and fish.
	Eastern Garter Snake (<i>Thamnophis s. sirtalis</i>)	Frequently seen. Inhabits fields, woods and marsh edges.
	Eastern Ribbon Snake (<i>Thamnophis s. sauritis</i>)	Frequently seen. A semiaquatic snake found along the edges of the freshwater pools, swamps and ditches, and occasionally in fields and woods.
	Ringneck Snake (<i>Diadophis punctatus</i>)	Secretive. Hides under stones and bark slabs in woodlands, especially near damp spots. Bright yellow to orange ring around neck.
	Northern Black Racer (<i>Coluber c. constrictor</i>)	Seen occasionally in the woods and along field edges. A large snake, active during the day.
	Rough Green Snake (<i>Ophiodrys aestivus</i>)	Difficult to observe because it blends with the background. Favors dense vegetation along shallow bodies of freshwater. Feeds on insects.
	Black Rat Snake (<i>Elaphe o. obsoleta</i>)	Common. Seen in the upland woods or on field edges. A large, thick, bodied snake. Excellent climber, often found in trees.
	Eastern Kingsnake (<i>Lampropeltis g. getula</i>)	Uncommon. Secretive, hiding under boards and logs. Hunts along the banks of freshwater pools and swamps. May feed on other snakes.
	Eastern Milk Snake (<i>Lampropeltis t. triangulum</i>)	Rare on Delaware's coastal plain. Secretive. Found around farm buildings and in fields and woods.
	Eastern Hognose Snake (<i>Heterodon platirhinos</i>)	Uncommon. Prefers cultivated fields and woodland meadows. Feeds on toads and frogs. Will play dead if harassed.
	Eastern Worm Snake (<i>Carphophis a. amoenus</i>)	Uncommon. Inhabits farmland bordering woodlands; dwells in damp situations under rocks, decaying logs, and loose soil.

The 35 species on this list have been identified on the Bombay Hook Refuge by refuge personnel with cooperation from the staff of the Philadelphia Zoological Garden. A special thanks also goes to Dr. Roger Conant, author of the Field Guide to the Reptiles of Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America, in the Peterson Series. To Skip Conant USFWS volunteer; Jim White of the Delaware Nature Society, Mike McLaughlin associated with Delaware conservation groups who assisted in updating this list. Names were taken from "Common and Scientific Names" by the Society for the Study of Reptiles and Amphibians. Other species no doubt exist on the refuge and reports of their identification will be welcomed at the refuge headquarters.

Amphibian and Reptile Identification Key

Red-back Salamander



Marbled Salamander



Spotted Salamander



Fowler's Toad



Northern Cricket Frog



Green Tree-frog



Gray Tree-frog



Northern Spring Peeper



New Jersey Chorus Frog



Bullfrog



Green Frog



Southern Leopard Frog



Pickerel Frog



Wood Frog



Common Snapping Turtle



Black Rat Snake



Eastern King-snake



Eastern Milk Snake



Amphibian and Reptile Identification Key

Common Musk Turtle



Eastern Mud Turtle



Spotted Turtle



Eastern Box Turtle



Eastern Painted Turtle



Redbelly Turtle



Northern Diamondback Terrapin



Five-lined Skink



Northern Fence Lizard



Northern Water Snake



Eastern Garter Snake



Eastern Ribbon Snake



Ring-neck Snake



Northern Black Racer



Rough Green Snake



Eastern Hognose Snake



Eastern Worm Snake

