

Salamander, Lizard & Snake

Identification Guide

Upper Michigan



Blue-spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*): Coloration can vary but generally they are black with turquoise or pale blue flecks and spots on the sides, limbs, belly, and tail. The belly may be black or grayish black. Adults average about 3.5 to 5.5 inches (8.9 to 14 cm) long.

Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*): A chunky bodied black or dark gray salamander with two rows of round yellow spots running from head to tail. Rarely, spots are tan or white, or even absent. Sides are usually unspotted, and the belly is grayish to purplish. Adults are 4.3 to 9.8 inches (110.8 to 24.8 cm) long.



Red-backed Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*): Thin bodied salamander that occurs in two common color phases, redback and leadback. In both the belly is mottled with a white and gray "salt and pepper" pattern. Adults are 2.3 to 5 inches (5.8 to 12.7 cm) long. Indicator species in woodland ecosystems. Their abundance signifies a healthy forest.

Five-lined Skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*): Adult five-lined skinks are 12.7 to 21.6 cm in length, are characterized by five yellow to cream colored stripes of equal width running dorsally and laterally from the snout to tail. These stripes, separated by darker lines, may lighten with age, eventually disappearing in older males.



Ring-necked Snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardii*): A small black or gray, shiny scaled snake with a yellow ring around its neck. Michigan ring-neck snakes have a plain yellow belly, sometimes with a few black dots down the mid-line. Adults measure 10 to 24 inches.



Red-bellied Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata occipitomaculata*): A very small brown or gray snake with faint stripes down its back. The belly is red, pink, or orange (without the double row of dots seen in the rare Kirtland's Snake.) Adult length: 8 to 16 inches.



Butler's Garter Snake (*Thamnophis butleri*): A small black, brown, or olive snake with three distinct yellow stripes down the back and a yellowish belly. Some specimens have dark spots between the stripes. The dark head is very small. Adults measure 15 to 27 inches.



Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*): A medium sized striped snake with variable coloration. Most are gray, brown, or greenish with three yellowish stripes down the back, and there may be black spots between the stripes, making the snake look "checkered". The belly is pale white, green, or yellow. The tongue is red with a black tip. Adults measures 2 to 4 feet. Most common snake in MI.