

Introducing *Pseudotriton ruber* – “Red Salamander” it’s Virginia’s official state salamander. Photo credit www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com

This small but beautiful amphibian, with its distinctive bright red and black or brown spots covering its body, is found throughout most of the commonwealth.

In 2018, this colorful wildlife species was named Virginia’s official state salamander. Del. Eileen Filler-Corn, D-Fairfax, sponsored the bill at the urging of young conservationists affiliated with Salamander Savers, an ecological-minded 4-H group whose members ranged in age from 8 to 18. This special designation was also made possible through a collaborated effort between Department of Wildlife Resources, the Virginia Herpetological Society, and many naturalists and teachers, who worked hard to raise awareness about salamanders.

Salamanders are amphibians and as adults are terrestrial and aquatic.

A female Salamanders lays eggs as a clutch. The eggs must remain in the water, or they will dry out. Once hatched, the salamander, in its larval stage, will spend the first part of its life in water breathing through gills like fish, extracting oxygen from the water---COLD, CLEAN, HIGHLY OXYGENATED WATER.

It’s not until they develop into adults do amphibians possess lungs (well, most of them anyway), allowing them to leave the water. Most amphibians have to keep their skin moist by staying near water or damp areas, since they breathe partially or entirely through their skin. (There are a few species of salamanders called “lungless salamanders” because they have no lungs and depend completely on their skin to breathe.)

Because their skin is so porous and absorbs gases, like oxygen, and liquids, like water, amphibians at all stages of life are sensitive to environmental disturbances and changes, especially many types of pollution that may be in the water, soil or air. Can salamanders survive a drought?

The only time to handle a salamander is as little as possible. The oils, salts, lotions etc. from our skin can cause harm to their delicate skin.

Design your own unique Salamander using the page below.

