

# ENDANGERED SPECIES

While visiting Monmouth County's wildlife management areas, state parks, county and municipal parks or your own backyard, you may come across some of the reptiles and amphibians that are on New Jersey's endangered or threatened species list. Here is the definition for these classifications:

**Endangered Species** are those whose prospects for survival in New Jersey are in immediate danger because of a loss or change in habitat, over-exploitation, predation, competition, disease or contamination. Assistance is needed to prevent future extinction in New Jersey.

**Threatened Species** are those who may become endangered if conditions surrounding them begin to or continue to deteriorate.

(Definitions are from <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/tandespp.htm>)



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## ATLANTIC HAWKSBILL



**Atlantic Hawksbill** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: This is a medium sized sea turtle. Their carapace usually ranges from 25 to 36 inches. The turtles can weigh up to 270 pounds and are colored very brightly. Their head is covered by deep maroon blotches and the blotches on the flipper are set in a uniform pattern. Their underside is yellow to off-white in color.

Habitat : They live in clean, off shore waters. Coral reefs are their choice habitat, however, they will come further north in the summer to nest on sandy beaches. This is the only time they inhabit land. Finding an Atlantic hawksbill in New Jersey would be quite a find. The only time they would be found in New Jersey would be in the summer when they come ashore to nest on the beach. They cannot tolerate cold and polluted waters.

## ATLANTIC LEATHERBACK



### **Atlantic Leatherback** (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Atlantic Leatherback is one of the largest of the sea turtles. Its' carapace can reach five feet in length and has 7 dorsal and 5 ventral keels.. Their front flippers can span up to nine feet. Their head is very small in comparison to their body. Whitish blotches are scattered across the turtles body.

Habitat: The Leatherbacks are found mostly offshore in deeper water. They will occasionally enter bays, estuaries, and beaches for reproduction. They tend to nest above the high water mark on beaches adjacent to deep water. Off shore they are usually spotted among the jellyfish on which they feed. They can be spotted on the shore during nesting periods. However, there is little scientific data available on when this is. Nesting on the east coast is dependent on latitude.

## ATLANTIC LOGGERHEAD



### **Atlantic Loggerhead** (*Caretta caretta*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Atlantic Loggerhead is a medium sized to large sea turtle. The length of its' carapace ranges from 28-38 inches in length. Its' body mass is around 300 pounds. Its' carapace is reddish to brown in color and its' underside (plastron) is a dull yellow. They have a large head and really powerful jaws.

Habitat: The Atlantic Loggerhead inhabits a wide variety of coastal areas from Florida up the coast to Nova Scotia. Most inhabit shallow coastal water where they can forage on small invertebrates. Some loggerheads will even find their way into freshwater bays and rivers. Like most sea turtles the Atlantic Loggerhead is usually spotted through chance encounters off shore. They do not prefer any specific habitat so there is really no best place to look for them. No information could be found on when and if they nest on New Jersey beaches.

## ATLANTIC RIDLEY



**Atlantic Ridley** (*Lepidochelys coriacea*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Atlantic Ridley is the smallest sea turtle in the world. Its' carapace is heart shaped and is just as long (28 inches) as it is wide. Their body mass rarely exceeds 100 pounds. Adults have a grayish-olive carapace and a white plastron.

Habitat: Nesting takes place at Rancho Nuevo, Mexico. They do not nest anywhere else in the world. They inhabit the seas from Mexico to Florida and all the way up to Nova Scotia. They like the open seas where they can feed on colonies of shrimp. More Atlantic Ridleys die from being caught in shrimp nets than from any other cause.

The Atlantic Ridley will only come close to shore if their food source (mainly shrimp) comes close to shore. Like most turtles, they are usually found by accident. Rancho Nuevo, Mexico during the nesting season is the only place where someone can be certain to see them. This is the world's most endangered sea turtle.

## BLUE SPOTTED SALAMANDER



### **Blue Spotted Salamander** (*Ambystoma laterale*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Blue Spotted Salamanders are usually from 4-5 ½ inches in length and have rather long legs and toes. They can be easily distinguished by blue and white spots scattered on the side of their bluish black body, legs, and tail.

Habitat: Like most amphibians the Blue Spotted Salamander breeds in the springtime in vernal pools and ponds. They seem to prefer mixed woodlands near alder swamps and slow-moving streams. The Blue Spotted Salamander is a nocturnal feeder. During the day they will spend most of their time in damp forests under cover. Turning over fallen logs and stones would be the best way to find them during the day. They will come out at night to feed on a wide variety of small invertebrates. Look for them in small ponds and ditches.

Territorial Ranges:



BOG TURTLE



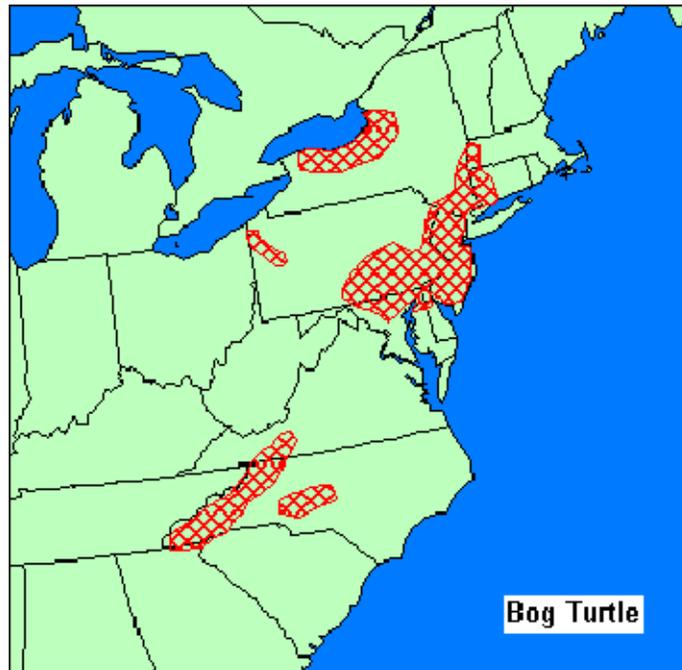
**Bog Turtle** (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Bog Turtle is very small reaching a maximum length of only 4 ½ inches. The carapace is a deep brown with yellow-orange marking in the grooves. Behind the eye on each side of its' head is a rather large red-orange blotch.

Habitat: Bog turtles tend to prefer living in bogs (hence the name Bog Turtle). They also like swamps and marshes near very clean spring fed streams. They like streams with soft bottoms so they can rapidly burrow when danger approaches. The coastal plains of Monmouth County are the most likely places to find bog turtles in New Jersey. Pure, unpolluted streams, swamps, and bogs are the only places someone would find a Bog Turtle. They tend to be found in areas with skunk cabbage and sedge tussocks.

Territorial range:



## CORN SNAKE



**Corn Snake** (*Elaphe g. guttata*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Corn Snake is identified by its reddish saddle shaped blotches outlined in black running down its tan to light orange back. The first reddish blotch forks usually points to each side of its head. Their underside has a distinct dark gray to black checkerboard pattern and they reach a maximum length of 48 inches.

Habitat: The Corn Snake can inhabit a variety of habitats such as hillsides, grasslands, barns, and even old abandoned buildings. The Corn Snake seems to prefer farmland habitats such as cornfields. They also inhabit the pinelands and other low flat areas where rodents are plentiful. The Pine Barrens is probably the best place to find the Corn Snake. They like to hide under old manmade substrates, logs, and buildings and they are good climbers so they are often found in trees. During the winter they can be found hibernating in rodent burrows.

## EASTERN MUD SALAMANDER



**Eastern Mud Salamander** (*Pseudotriton montanus montanus*)

Status: Threatened

Characteristics: Eyes are very brown in color. This separates them from the Northern Red salamander, which have yellow eyes. Their back is a dark orange to red, sometimes brown. Its underside is much lighter. Black round spots occur very sparsely on these salamanders' body. They can range in length from 3 to 6 inches.

Habitat: Only two specimens have been recorded in New Jersey. They prefer clear spring fed brooks or swamps along coastal plains. Because they are burrowers they need very fine soft sediment and they could be found by looking under stones and logs. The only place in New Jersey that meets these requirements is the Pine Barrens, where the salamander will burrow in spring seepages from old cranberry bogs.

## EASTERN TIGER SALAMANDER



**Eastern Tiger Salamander** (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: Can reach up to 13 inches in length making it one of the largest salamanders in the US. This is a very stocky salamander with thick legs and a long thick tail. The body is very

dark brown in color with many yellow to olive colored blotches covering the body giving it a tiger striped appearance.

Habitat: Found throughout the United States. In New Jersey, they are found along the Pinelands from Toms River to Cape May. They breed in vernal pools found in gravel pits and forests. Then they leave and burrow within oak woodlands nearby. Can be found in or nearby vernal pools in the Pine Barrens. Like most salamanders they are nocturnal. During the day they hide underneath logs and stumps.



## LONG TAILED SALAMANDER



**Long-tailed Salamander** (*Eurycea longicauda longicauda*)

Status: Threatened

Characteristics: As its name indicates, this salamander has a very long tail. It is bright yellow in color with very small black markings on its back and sides. It ranges in length from 4 to 6 ½ inches long of which more than 50% is its tail.

Habitat: In the springtime they inhabit vernal pools where they lay their eggs. The salamander can be found under logs (especially rotten logs) and piles of debris in woodlands near cool

streams. They also can be found in rock piles and backyard firewood piles. They range from central New Jersey to northern New Jersey into New York.



**Northern Pine Snake** (*Pituophis m. melanoleucus*)

Status: Threatened

Characteristics: This is one of the largest snakes in New Jersey. It ranges in length from 4 feet to 6 feet long. They usually have a white to light tan colored body covered by black blotches extending from head to tail. Its belly is almost entirely pure white. In order to help the snake burrow better, the head is small in comparison to the body.

Habitat: As the name implies, the Northern Pine snake tends to prefer pine forests such as the Pine Barrens. It likes to burrow so it needs soft-sandy soil to make its home underground. They spend most of their time underground; this makes them hard to find. They have a very loud and distinct hiss that can be heard from far away. Early morning and late afternoon when it is cool is when they are most active. During this time is when they leave their burrows to hunt for food.

## PINE BARRENS TREE FROG



**Pine Barrens Treefrog** (*Hyla andersonii*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: It only measures about 1 ½ inches. Has a broad round head, long legs with adhesive discs on the toes. Males have vocal sac. They have a bright green body with lavender stripes bordered in white. They have an orange stripe in the folds of their legs giving the illusion they are wearing gloves.

Habitat: Prefers to breed in the warm acidic waters of swamps and bogs of the Pine Barrens (This is the only place in New Jersey where they can be found). The southern white cedar is the frogs prime terrestrial habitat choice. Not much is known about its non-breeding habitat.

## SOUTHERN GREY TREE FROG



**Southern Gray Treefrog** (*Hyla chrysoscelis*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: The Southern Gray Treefrog is much larger than the Pine Barrens Treefrog. It ranges between 2 to 2 ½ inches in length. They are usually gray to a grayish green in color. For a frog they have many warts on their back. One of its' most distinguishing characteristics are very light dots below each eye.

Habitat: The Southern Gray Treefrog inhabits the trees of deciduous forests in southern New Jersey. They will travel great distances to breed in swamps, marshes, and gravel pit ponds. They range from Maine all the way down to Florida. The deciduous woodlands and swamps of south Jersey are their prime habitat. However, during the breeding season they tend to prefer gravel pits and sandy pine barren like areas. They are known to travel long distances to find breeding sites, so the northern pine barrens might be a spot where they can be found.

## TIMBER RATTLESNAKE



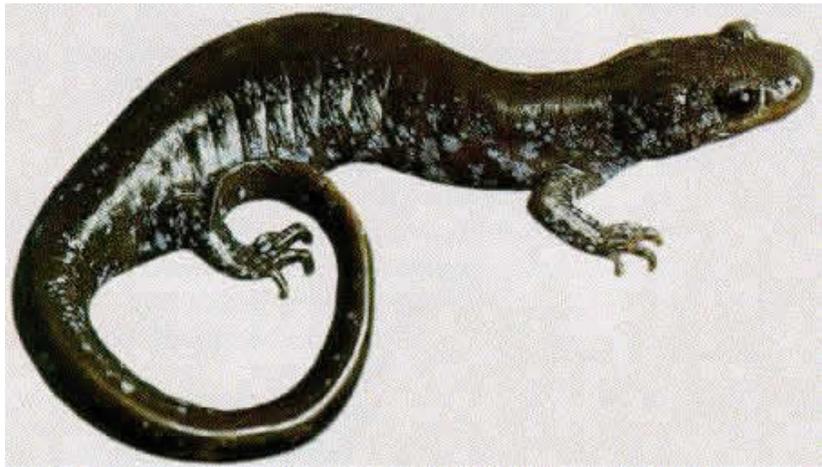
**Timber Rattlesnake** (*Crotalus h. horridus*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: This is probably one of the easiest snakes to identify. They range in length from 36 to 60 inches long and they have a rattle at the end of their tail, which is very loud. They use this to ward off any predators. The markings on their body are also very distinct. Their color varies from black crossbands on a gray body to dark brown crossbands on a light brown body. They have a broad arrow shaped head. Their venom is very toxic and they are very quick.

Habitat: The Timber Rattlesnake inhabits very steep and very rocky hillsides in wooded areas. They prefer hillsides that face to the south. They are occasionally found in lowland meadows and farmland where there are lots of chipmunks and mice. The northern woodlands of New Jersey are where they are most plentiful.

## TREMBLAY'S SALAMANDER



**Tremblay's Salamander** (*Ambystoma tremblayi*)

Status: Endangered

Characteristics: Tremblay's salamander is very similar to the Blue Spotted salamander. However, Tremblay's salamander is slightly larger, lighter in color, and has less spotting. It has relatively long toes and its' belly is usually very black.

Habitat: Tremblay's salamanders almost always congregate in areas with Blue-Spotted salamanders. They prefer a mixed woodland habitat near swamps and slow moving streams. In the spring they move to vernal pools for reproduction. This species is very rare in New Jersey. Tremblay's salamander is a Mole salamander. This means they like to burrow under leaves, logs, and rocks. So, turning over these objects in late summer and fall may yield results. Wading through vernal pools in the late spring or early summer is a good way to find this salamander. However, they are nocturnal feeders and may be very difficult to find during the day.

Distribution:



## WOOD TURTLE



### **Wood Turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*)**

Status: Threatened

Characteristics: The Wood Turtle ranges in length from 5 to 8 inches. The carapace is its' most distinguishing characteristic. The carapace is keeled and is sculpted by pyramid effects appearing

on the scutes indicating its' age. The legs are usually orange in color to a slight red. A central yellowish blotch outlined in black marks the underside.

Habitat: The Wood Turtle is not a solitary turtle. They live together in colonies. The wood turtle prefers dense hardwood forests near clean streams which they inhabit during courtship. The Wood Turtles tend to return to the same stream every year. They do not tolerate pollution very well. They can be found near clean stream in hardwood forests and wet meadows in the northern and central part of the state.

Territorial Range:

