

RED-BACKED SALAMANDER SURVEYS

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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PROJECT GOALS: To collect data related to Eastern Red-backed Salamander presence at Ward Farm Recreation and Nature Park to submit to the SPARCnet research project: <https://sparcnet.org/home/research/>

SKILLS NEEDED

- Capable of reading and following detailed instructions
- Proficient at keeping detailed records
- Ability to use tools such as rulers and thermometers
- Comfortable handling salamanders
- Comfortable working outdoors and walking outside over uneven terrain
- Able to bend and stoop

OPTIONAL BUT PREFERRED SKILLS

- Experience with wildlife data collection is a plus.

REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

- Volunteers must be comfortable walking in wooded areas off-trail on uneven terrain and hilly ground through leaves and other detritus
- Volunteers are expected to confidently lift cover boards in order to survey for salamanders knowing other animals may be taking refuge under cover boards as well
- Once any salamanders are found, volunteers must collect and record data including the size and sex of the salamander and other identifying features

VOLUNTEER DUTIES

- Volunteers will walk to the cover board sites with a staff member
- Upon entering the survey site, the first measurement taken is the air and soil temperatures using pre-placed thermometers
- Once site data is collected, volunteers will begin lifting cover boards to look for salamanders
- If a salamander is found, volunteers must alert the staff member and collect tools to begin collecting and recording data
- Data to be collected is: snout to vent length, total length, location found (site and board #), sex, number of eggs (if female), cirri present (if male), phase (red-backed vs. lead-backed)
- Once data is collected, salamanders should be placed back on the ground next to the cover board they were found under, which should be placed in the exact spot it was pulled up

VOLUNTEER TRAININGS

- Volunteers will not be required to complete training before they sign up. Training will take place on-site, the day of the volunteer's shift. Training includes expectations of the volunteer, going over data that will be collected in the case of salamanders found.
 - Volunteers will respond to salamander survey opportunities on the Galaxy Digital Volunteer Portal <https://calvertstewards.galaxydigital.com/>.

PROJECT DATES

- Cover boards for this project were laid down in June of 2023. The project requires that the cover boards are placed on site at least 3 months before beginning the surveys.
- This project consisted of five survey dates: September 21, October 1, 12, 19, and 28.
- Surveys took about 30 minutes to complete

SUMMARY OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

- Site B was found vandalized and unusable at one survey session- boards were all moved around, "do not enter" sign located at entryway of site was removed from the ground, and PVC pipe protecting the soil thermometer was removed as well.
- We only found one salamander this season, on the last survey date.
 - This was possibly due to the cover boards being newly placed this year, perhaps the animals hadn't become accustomed to using them as habitable spaces yet. This also could be due to the first grade CHESPAX program being in full swing at this time, it's possible animals were looking for better places to hide due to increased human activity in the area.
 - The salamander we found was a lead-back phase female
- We encountered several other animals while surveying such as wolf spiders, a worm snake, fowlers toad, slugs, worms, millipedes, and beetles



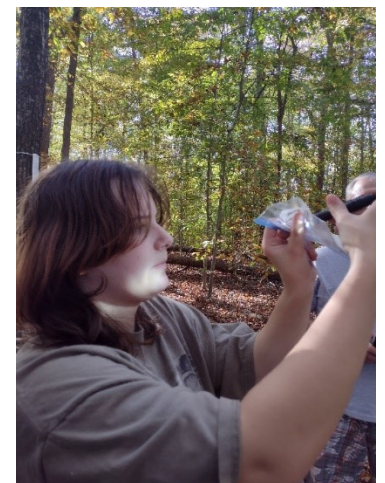
2023 VOLUNTEER HOURS:

Six volunteers contributes 5.43 hours over the course of the entire project

- Sydney Weller
- Maggie Silverman
- Cindy and Jayden Eversole
- Amanda and Julian Shores

FUTURE PLANS:

- Continue project in Spring of 2024 and again in Fall.
- Increase number of survey dates to 8 and push back surveys to later in the season for fall since the salamander we found was the last session of the season.
- Re-set expectations for project time- originally the time commitment of the project was listed as two hours which turned out to be much more than necessary. Only about half an hour is needed for this project.



Photos of volunteers Sydney Weller (top) and Jayden Eversole

Supporting Calvert County's nature parks and natural spaces



CALVERT STEWARDS

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

A partnership between Calvert Nature Society and Calvert County Natural Resources Division

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CALVERT STEWARDS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
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Volunteer Portal: <https://calvertstewards.galaxydigital.com/>

Calvert Nature Society: www.calvertparks.org

Calvert County Natural Resources Division:
www.calvertcountymd.gov/NaturalResources

