

Conservation in the Park

Humans have a large role to play in the future survival and health of these animals. Many of these species rely on clean water habitats surrounded by intact forest to reach maturity and reproduce. The loss of habitat due to water pollution, wetland destruction and deforestation result in devastating declines in reptile and amphibian populations. Amphibians are especially sensitive to water, soil and air pollution because they breathe through their skin, and turtles can be killed by ingesting plastic trash items. By using lawn care products responsibly to maintain clean water environments, making sure garbage is placed in proper receptacles, and helping to ensure that forested habitats close to water are maintained we can work together to secure the futures of these fascinating species. If you know of roads running through these habitats drive slowly, especially during rain as these animals may be traveling across!



Eastern Hognose (Snake): This non-venomous snake can range in color from a dull brown or gray to a bright red or orange like the one pictured. If approached this snake will hiss, flatten its head to appear larger, and play "dead" to scare predators.

Wildlife in the Park

The park lands were put aside to protect historic Civil War battlefields; they also protect many valuable wildlife habitats. As you walk along the trails, make sure to go quietly, so you are more likely to encounter wildlife. You might see some of the remarkable creatures featured in this brochure or make a discovery of your own! While most of the animals at Richmond National Battlefield Park are harmless, they should be admired from a distance. Animals may act unpredictably when frightened. To find wildlife, use the tips from this brochure and any other nature guides you might have.



Northern Cricket Frog: Though it's in the Treefrog family this frog does not climb. Rather it is found in shallow water with lots of plants around to hide under.

Nature in Richmond National Battlefield Park



Five-Lined Skink: The lizard shown here is an adult, the juveniles, or young, will be clearly marked by their blue tails. These skinks eat large spiders or grasshoppers. Their powerful jaws can deliver a painful bite if they feel threatened.

This brochure is one of a series featuring wildlife in historic Richmond National Battlefield Park. Look for other brochures about the trees, plants & fungi, insects & spiders, birds and mammals.

Images from front:

American Toad: Coloration of this toad ranges from shades of brown and gray to brick red with yellow-red to dark brown warts. They tend to hide under leaf litter near bodies of water.

Black Rat Snake: Usually plain black and shiny, possibly with a spotted pattern, this snake is not venomous but it will strike if threatened. It strangles its prey, usually mice, young rats and birds. Like most other snakes, it is very shy and will try to escape danger.

Eastern Box Turtle: Omnivorous and predominantly terrestrial, with shells ranging in color from yellow to orange to brown. A broad hinge forms across the plastron so this turtle can hide completely in its shell. These turtles can live to be 100 years old.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Richmond National Battlefield Park



Amphibians & Reptiles



Richmond National Battlefield Park

Richmond, Virginia

Reptiles

Reptiles are best known for their scaly skin which can be shed all at one time in a “molt.” They are vertebrates (have a backbone) with a skeleton that makes them well-suited to live on land, though some groups are aquatic, like turtles and water snakes. Reptiles can be found all over the park, possibly basking in the sun on cooler days.



Broadhead Skink: Also known as the “red-headed scorpion” it can be 6-12” long and found around trees and logs in the forest.

Lizards

Lizards are closely related to snakes. In this area, lizards are typically smaller with long, skinny bodies, two pairs of legs and a long tail used for fat storage. A few types of lizards have no legs and look a lot like snakes! They can be found during warm months, often sunbathing on rocks, logs or fences, but they hibernate during winter months.



Northern Fence Lizard: This spiny lizard can often be found on fences and rotting logs. Like most lizards, it is easily startled and will dart away quickly if approached.

Turtles

Turtles are the longest lived vertebrates. They have a shell made of two parts, the carapace (upper) and the plastron (lower), which protect the body. Turtles are usually omnivorous and eat anything from aquatic vegetation to crayfish. Turtles are found near water, many times sunning on a log or rock. As you drive

from Fort Harrison to Fort Hoke, you might see some turtles in the “moat” along the road.



Eastern Painted Turtle (juvenile): When it is dry, the red and black markings at the edge of the shell are visible. These turtles can live to be 30 years old!

Snakes

Snakes are long, legless reptiles with a very flexible backbone and up to 300 ribs! Snakes swallow their food whole, so they eat smaller prey and play an important role in keeping rodent populations low. The few snakes that are venomous will kill their prey before eating it; the only venomous snake found in the park is the Copperhead. Because they lack an inner ear, snakes use their tongues to sense things around them. They can be found in the park in grassy or forested areas.



Eastern Garter Snake: Snakes like this one are harmless to humans and can be found anywhere in the park, especially under stones, logs and leaf litter.

Amphibians

Amphibians are vertebrates that usually live in damp environments to keep their skin moist. They have poorly developed lungs, so moisture helps them “breathe” through their skin, making them very sensitive to pollution. Because of pollution in recent years, the numbers of amphibians



Gray Treefrog: This nocturnal frog lives in plants near water. You might hear a flute-like trill rather than see this animal.

have been declining. The park works hard to keep the habitats of these animals clean and intact. Amphibians can be divided into frogs, toads and salamanders. They can often be seen in or near park streams and marshy, wetland areas.

Salamanders

Salamanders have a body shape similar to that of lizards, but they lack scales. Unlike frogs and toads, they have tails but no vocal chords. Their legs are so short that their bellies drag the ground when they walk!



Marbled Salamander: can be found in cool, moist areas of the park, especially under rocks and logs along the forested trails. The females guard their eggs until they hatch.

A “newt” is a type of salamander that is mostly aquatic.

Frogs & Toads

Frogs & toads are widely distributed and have very unique back legs that allow them to leap. Many have unique tongues that are attached to the front of the mouth, making insect prey easier to catch. Typically, toads have a noticeable paratoid gland, or a large bump, behind their eyes, unlike frogs.



Spring Peeper: This chorus frog can be found in marshes and wetlands around the park. The males make a loud, peeping sound to attract their mates.

Turtles basking on a log in the “moat” between Fort Harrison and Fort Hoke. Look carefully for turtles like these as you drive by. Turtles, like other reptiles, are very shy. To escape any danger, they will quickly dive in the water.

