

2021

The Four Mysterious Salamanders

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Recommended Citation

H, Kayla (2021) "The Four Mysterious Salamanders," *Findings from the Field*: Vol. 4 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://findings.gmri.org/journal/vol4/iss1/16>

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The Four Mysterious Salamanders

On April 12, when spring was starting to appear and every last pile of snow had melted, I walked outside into the woods behind my school to look for salamanders. I observed 4 different salamanders in three different locations. The two salamanders were slimy brown with hints of red. They were roughly 2.5 inches long and they looked like worms because they did not have any limbs. They slithered quickly under an old tarp lying in the woods and the ground underneath the tarp was damp and cool. When I did research on the NH State Wildlife Website, <https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife>, I learned that salamanders like cool and damp places. This is why they are commonly found in ponds and swamp areas. I also tried to identify the salamander using the same website. When reading about redback salamanders, I learned that in adolescent stages they are dark with hints of red, and then when they grow older they develop a bright red stripe on their back. At this moment, I believe that the salamanders that I saw under the tarp were redback salamanders. I was even more sure of this when I found what I believe to be an adult redback salamander under a log by a stream. The stream was far into the woods and there were not a lot of predators for the salamanders because there were lots of skunk cabbage plants nearby. Research taught me that skunk cabbage is highly poisonous to most animals and it releases a smell that I did not think smelled very good. The salamander was roughly 3 inches long and it had a bright red stripe running down its back.

After observing those three salamanders, I walked further into the woods until I found an old log. I rolled it over and immediately spotted a bright red salamander. It was a little over 1 inch long and it was curled up into a little ball. Its tail curled so that it looked like a tie dye swirl and it had small dark red spots on its back. It did not move when we rolled the log off of it and it froze instead. My teacher picked it up and it moved proving that it was alive. We rolled the log back over and then placed the salamander close to underneath the log so that it could crawl back under it. In order to identify the salamander, I went to the same New Hampshire wildlife website and discovered that it was a red spotted newt. Red spotted newts are typically found in the woods in New Hampshire so I currently believe that my theory of the newts species is correct. These newts and salamanders are very small, and it is amazing to me that they survive all alone in the woods. I wonder how they find their mates if they hide under logs all day, and I wonder how long they live. I also wonder how much moisture their environment needs to have in order for them to survive. I hope to go outside and back to the woods to make more observations in the future and to see if the newt and salamanders have moved locations since the last time I observed them.

