

In Your Backyard

Animals are all around you! But can you find them?

Summary:

Explore your own backyard and nature spaces, looking for evidence of reptiles and amphibians. Learn where and what to look (and listen!) for while you search for these local animals.

Guiding Questions:

What do you see? What can you hear?

Where might these animals live?

How do these animals hide?

Experience Goals:

- Explore where reptiles and amphibians might live around you.
- Use field guides to compare and identify reptiles and amphibians.
- Get outside and have fun!

Supplies:

- Reptile & Amphibian Field Guides
<https://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org/guides/guide/383>
- Habitat Checklist (page 6)
- Frog Call Audio
<https://frogsurvey.org/?page id=9>
- Optional: Magnifying glass, binoculars, and camera

Steps:

1. Explore Field Guides & Frog Calls
 - a. Get familiar with the animals that live around you.
 - b. What features do you notice? What does each frog sound like?
2. Go Outside!
 - a. Go to your backyard or local nature space on a warm day.
 - b. Look and listen! Take a minute to stand still. Use your eyes and ears to notice what is around you. What can you see? What do you hear?
 - c. Reptiles and amphibians like to hide, so you might not see anything. Fill out the Habitat Checklist to see if the area is a good home for these animals. Look for places they would want to be! Are there rocks or branches you can turn over? Is there water nearby where frogs would be?
 - d. It's okay if you don't find anything! That doesn't mean they aren't there. Keep looking for evidence. Do you notice any other animals? What are they?

Variations:

- Can't get outside?

Look at or print the attached images and try to identify the animals using the Field Guides. Try to identify them by just looking at the images and not the animal names. What do you notice about each animal? What features are similar with this collection of animals?
- Listen to the frog calls.

Click on the Frog Call Audio link and choose a frog. What does the call sound like to you? Can you replicate it with anything around the house?

Extensions:

- **Share your findings with scientists!**
Did you find something? You can share your observation on <https://www.inaturalist.org/> Explore what other people have observed in their backyards!
- **Want to make your backyard a good home for reptiles and amphibians?** Build a toad abode! Google “Toad Abode” for ideas and inspiration.
- **Become a community scientist!** Learn how to become a frog monitor at <https://frogsurvey.org/>
- **Discover more Field Museum Field Guides at** <https://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org/>

Animals to identify:



Blanding's Turtle



American Bullfrog



Plains Garter Snake



Common Mudpuppy

Animals to identify:



Northern Green Frog



Fowler's Toad



Six-lined Racerunner



Red-eared Slider

Habitat Checklist:

These are what your habitat needs to be a good home to reptiles and amphibians. If you are able to check the items off, then you might have reptiles and amphibians around you! If you cannot, can you add anything to the area to attract the animals? Like a toad abode or a pile of leaves?

Amphibians

☐

Water nearby

To swim and lay eggs

☐

Places to hide

Examples: leaf litter, stumps, rotting logs, toad abodes

☐

Damp areas

To keep their skin moist

Reptiles

☐

Places to hide

Examples: leaf litter, logs, plants, low shrubs

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Warm places to bask in the sun

Examples: rocks, flat logs, open mulch areas

☐

Few humans

Reptiles prefer areas that are quiet

Photo Credits:

Northern Green Frog:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Northern_Green_Frog_-
Tewksbury,_NJ.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Northern_Green_Frog_-_Tewksbury,_NJ.jpg)

American Bullfrog:

<https://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.aspx?SpeciesID=71>
Ed Nied Jr

Blanding's Turtle:

<https://sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=D7FAFB03-1&printfullpage=true>
Scott Gillingwate

Red-eared Slider:

publicdomainpictures.net

Fowler's Toad:

<https://srelherp.uga.edu/anurans/buffow.htm>
J.D. Willson

Common Mudpuppy

Creative Commons

Todd Pierson

Six-lined Racerunner:

<http://herpsofnc.org/six-lined-racerunner/>
Mike Martin

Plains Gartersnake: https://www.sdherps.org/species/thamnophis_radix

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