



EduPic Fact File

Red-spotted Newt - *Notophthalmus viridescens*



The bright colors of the red-spotted newt, in its eft stage, warn predators of its toxic skin.

Description: The red-spotted newt is a salamander with an unusual life cycle. Starting life as one of 300 to 400 eggs, the aquatic larvae that hatches is olive green with external gills. The newt then goes through metamorphosis to become a land dwelling eft. The eft wears the warning colors of bright red or orange with rows of black ringed spots (pictured above.) After two to seven years on land, the adult newt then returns to water, without gills, and to its olive coloration and with a flattened tail specialized for swimming.

Habitat: The red-spotted newt ranges throughout eastern North America from the Great Lakes region and maritime Canada to Texas and Florida in the south. The eggs, larva, and adult are all aquatic, living in freshwater ponds, small lakes, and streams, in forest biomes. The eft lives among the leaf litter and other moist areas in the same forests.

Diet: This salamander eats small invertebrates including snails and insect larvae found within its community according to its stage of development.

Fun Facts: The aposematic (warning) coloring of this newt warns predators that its skin secretes a toxin (poison.) If threatened, the eft will twist to expose or rub its back, where the secretions are strongest, against the attacker.

Photo Log: The eft pictured above and several others were found following heavy spring rains along a hiking trail off the Blue Ridge Parkway in the George Washington National Forest of Virginia. They were so numerous that we had to watch closely as to not step on them along about a kilometer of the trail.

References: Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, The University of Georgia.
Center for Reptile and Amphibian Conservation and Management, Perdue.
Animal Diversity Web, University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.