

HOW TO IDENTIFY COMMON NEW YORK FROG AND SALAMANDER EGGS

Telling Frog Eggs Apart from Salamander Eggs



The masses of salamander eggs are surrounded by an outer layer of gelatinous material, whereas masses of frog eggs lack that outer protective layer. The extra layer of gel around salamander eggs is thought to provide their eggs with some protection against predators.

Left: Spotted salamander eggs; Right: Wood frog eggs
Photos by Sharon Mammoser



Wood Frog (eggs found during mid-March - April)

Wood frogs lay eggs (see picture above) in a large globular mass about 2 to 5 inches in diameter (roughly the size of a softball).

There are about 500 to 2000 eggs per mass, with embryos colored black on top and white on bottom. However, the white disappears as the larvae develops. Their egg masses are very 'cohesive,' meaning that it will hold together if you take it out of the water. Wood frogs typically attach their eggs to submerged plants and tree branches near or on the water surface. Wood frogs commonly lay their eggs near each other in "rafts," like the one pictured to the right. Wood frogs are one of the earliest breeders and thus one of the first eggs you'll find come spring.



Northern Leopard Frog (eggs found during April-May)

Northern leopard frogs are easily distinguishable from wood frog eggs because the individual eggs are smaller (less than a tenth of an inch, about the size of a grain of salt) and more tightly packed. They usually lay double to triple the amount of eggs as wood frogs, even up to 6,000 eggs! However, the size of the overall egg mass is roughly softball size, similar to that of wood frogs. The egg mass of a northern leopard frog appears almost black because the layer of clear jelly that surrounds the yolk is much thinner than in wood frogs. Their egg masses are not cohesive, and will easily fall apart when taken out of the water. These egg masses are found an inch or so below the water's surface, attached to vegetation or even resting on the bottom of vernal pools, whereas wood frog eggs float closer to the surface.



Beth Secrist



Pickerel Frog (eggs found during April - May)

Pickerel frog eggs look very similar to northern leopard frog eggs, with egg masses around 3-4 inches in diameter and embryos also salt-grain size. However, rather than the embryos being black on top and white on bottom like leopard frog eggs, pickerel eggs are brown on top and yellow on the bottom. Other than this, the eggs look pretty similar, are also laid near the water's surface on vegetation in loose globular masses.



Pam Owen



Spotted Salamander (eggs found during early April – end of May)

Spotted salamanders lay grapefruit sized egg masses, with about 50-250 eggs. The eggs are black but the egg mass is clear, opaque white, or a greenish color from algae. These dense, firm egg masses hold their shape very well, and are usually attached to sticks, branches and vegetation below the surface of the water. Like wood frogs, you can often find large numbers of egg masses in one spot, attached to the same group of branches. A picture of spotted salamander eggs is also provided at the top of the first page.



Jefferson salamander (eggs found during late March - mid May)

Like spotted salamanders, Jefferson salamanders lay their eggs in clear globs attached to sticks and other vegetation.

However, each mass usually includes only 20-30 eggs, and the masses can be more sausage shaped. Females will lay multiple masses, sometimes laid down in a line down a single stick. But as these swell they will look like one long mass. Jefferson salamander egg masses are not as firm, and if you pick up the egg mass, it will likely run through your fingers rather than hold its shape.



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American Toad (eggs found late April – May)

American toad eggs are easy to identify because they are laid in long, coiled strands half an inch wide with 4,000

to 8,000 eggs. Because hatching and tadpole development can be completed within 4-6 weeks, toads can use very short-lived bodies of water to lay their eggs, even including dirt road ruts and large puddles.



RW Sinclair

Green Frogs (eggs found mid May to August) and American Bullfrog (late May to July)



Hazel Galloway

Left: Green frog eggs, Right: American Bullfrog eggs

Also, if you look at the eggs closely, American bullfrogs only have one very thin, weak jelly layer surrounding an individual egg, while green frog eggs have two jelly layers per egg.

Both American bullfrogs and Green frogs lay their eggs as a thin film floating on the water, only about one or two eggs thick. Eggs are often in vegetated areas close to the shore. Their eggs look very similar, but green frogs usually have fewer eggs. Green frog egg films are only about 1ft in diameter and contain about 1,000 to 5,000 eggs, whereas American bullfrogs can have egg films larger than 3ft in diameter, with 10,000 to 20,000 eggs each.