

including salamanders, are found in New York City:

- Green frog
- Atlantic Coast leopard frog
- Eastern new green toad
- Gray tree frog
- American toad
- Spotted salamander
- Eastern red-backed salamander
- Northern two-lined salamander
- Northern dusky salamander
- Northern red salamander
- Eastern newt

Unfortunately, salamander species are not currently protected, according to Ms. Savant, so protection is mainly tied to wetlands regulations and wetland management. In consideration of mitigating some of these pressures, the NRG is working to advocate for strong New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) freshwater wetland regulations; sharing stories of sensitive salamander species with communities and agencies; and advancing the idea of incorporating salamander-friendly designs when restoring landscapes.

Wetlands face impacts from trash, habitat fragmentation, excess nutrients through fertilizer runoff, and the effects of climate change. Ms. Savant mentioned that proposed amended NYS DEC regulations, rolling out in 2025, will include a shift in agency oversight for wetlands of 7.2 acres from the current 12.4 acres. Additionally, urban wetlands will be regulated as wetlands of unusual importance, and the DEC will now regulate vernal pools. Wood frogs and spotted salamanders benefit from vernal pool habitats.

NYC Parks is conducting a citywide

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freshwater wetland assessment with the aim to protect parks with freshwater wetlands with high ecological value at the greatest risk. Furthermore, NYC Parks is working to identify wetlands that meet certain criteria for recommendation for the creation of a Bluebelt. NYC Parks continue to engage with the broader community surrounding parks to advocate for salamander conservation. For instance, the agency holds “celebrate salamanders” events to raise awareness, connect and meet neighbors with shared interests, and recruit volunteers interested in maintaining salamander habitat. A field guide was created called “Woodland Salamanders of New York City” that highlights the variety and habitats of salamanders found in the five boroughs.

Carl E. Kauffeld, one-time notable director of the Staten Island Zoological Society (the Staten Island Zoo), authored a paper in 1937 on the status of leopard frogs while serving as the Zoo’s curator of reptiles. While studying local populations of Southern and Northern leopard frogs, Kauffeld was convinced that there was another frog species present, by virtue of its distinct call that differentiated it from that of the other two. The discovery failed to gain support among scientists and herpetologists, and Kauffeld’s claim of a third species of frog garnered suspicion and doubt because of the difficulties in assessing the close differences with the other two species. The findings languished in the years since Kauffeld’s death in 1974.

The idea of a third species of frog in the region continued to spark interest and research, however. Finally, Kauffeld’s initial hunch was confirmed in 2014 when Jeremy Feinberg, a researcher in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources at Rutgers University, reported on evidence that indeed a third frog species had been overlooked all these years

Atlantic Coast leopard frog rediscovered

John Butler, a Wildlife Biologist with the NYS DEC, started with a retelling of the unusual saga of the Atlantic Coast leopard frog.



Life beneath our feet: Our wetlands are more than just beautiful landscapes; they’re home to sensitive salamander species in need of protection. Let’s advocate for their survival!