



## NH Reptile and Amphibian Reporting Program (RAARP) & NH Wildlife Sightings



Dear RAARP/NH Wildlife Sightings Participant,

Peeppers and wood frogs are starting to call and several snakes and turtles have been observed already, possibly a record start. We had a great reporting year during 2011 and exciting things are happening in New Hampshire that will benefit our reptile and amphibian populations. Keep up the good work and check out the 2011 summary to see how your reports compared to others.



Remember that **photos** and **exact locations of sightings** are extremely important for biologists to verify your reports. If you are unable to take a photograph, note a description of the size, coloration, distinctive patterns or markings, and habitat. This information substantially increases our success in verifying reports. Recordings or descriptions of their calls are also helpful. We are encouraging reporters to use our new NH Wildlife

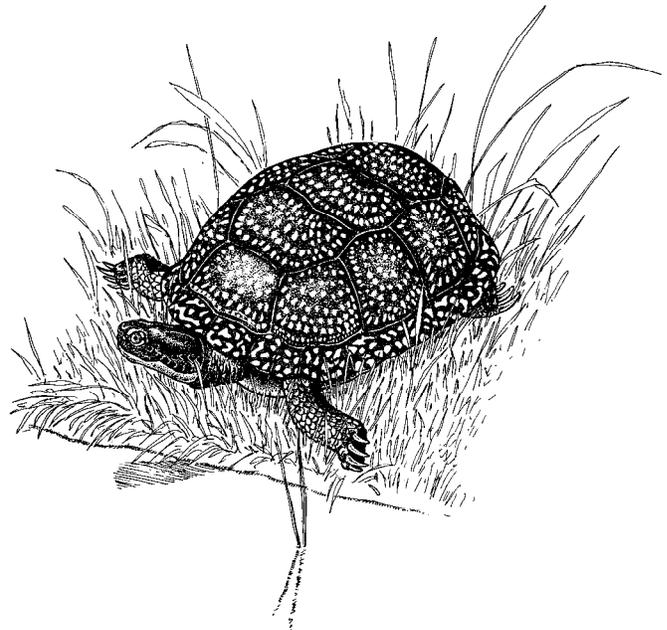
Sightings reporting system but if you have difficulty using this system or prefer another reporting mechanism, **we still allow reporting slips to be snail mailed and/or emailed** - we just need all of the information filled out on the standardized form (especially location and species description details). For more information, see reporting details below and on NHFG website. Your reports are valuable to us and we appreciate your input on the reporting process as well.

## WHAT'S NEW?

### NHFG Awarded Competitive State Wildlife Grant From U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The NH Fish & Game Department was recently awarded a nationally competitive State Wildlife Grant for the Conservation of Blanding's Turtles (*Emydoidea blandingii*) and associated wetland species in the Northeast. The objective of the project is to maintain and enhance functional wildlife habitat in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania by applying conservation principles and practices needed to support a healthy Blanding's Turtle population.

In the short-term, project partners will cooperate to develop a conservation plan for Blanding's Turtles in the northeastern United States, initiate standardized monitoring of the species' status,



assess management units through genetic analysis, and initiate implementation of the Plan by managing habitat to reduce road mortality and engaging key partners to prioritize land acquisition, restoration, and management activities. Monitoring of Blanding's turtle sites will begin this Spring 2012.

In the long-term, conservation partners will apply information developed through this grant to maintain healthy populations of Blanding's Turtle in the Northeast through cooperative land protection, restoration, and habitat management.

### **Report Roadkill Blanding's Turtles and Help with Regional Genetics Study**

The NHFG is planning a study to assess the population genetics of Blanding's turtles across the Northeast. In anticipation of this project, we are beginning to collect samples. If you find a dead Blanding's turtle (e.g., roadkill), please let us know ASAP ([RAARP@wildlife.nh.gov](mailto:RAARP@wildlife.nh.gov), 603-271-2461, or *NH Wildlife Sightings*) along with the detailed location information. We will store dead specimens at NHFG Headquarters, Concord. We will NOT be taking samples from live turtles at this time so please do not collect or handle live turtles. (It is illegal to possess Blanding's, wood, spotted, and Eastern box turtles in NH)

### **Northeast Meeting Hosted by NH – July 24-26, 2012**



NHFG will be hosting the annual Northeast Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) meeting. The meeting will be at the AMC Highland Center in Bretton Woods during July 24-26. All are welcome to attend. Please see website for meeting and registration information. <http://www.northeastparc.org/meetings/index.htm>.



NH's David Carroll will be the keynote speaker on the evening of July 25<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will also include a FrogWatch USA monitoring training during July 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **NH Black Racer Snake Project Continues...**

During 2010 and 2011 the NHFG Nongame & Endangered Wildlife Program initiated a multi-year black racer monitoring project to document the species' habitat-use, movement patterns and population status in the state. Twenty-seven racers from 9 sites (towns of Webster, Hopkinton, Weare, Deerfield and Raymond) were monitored with radio telemetry. Ninety-seven snakes were individually marked with PIT tags (microchips inserted under the skin) so they could be identified if captured again (an important component of population surveys)!!! Monitoring is slated to continue during 2012 at the current sites and at least a few new sites in other areas. The data collected from the study will allow us to prioritize and implement conservation actions such as land acquisition and habitat management. Your black racer observations are extremely valuable to us. Please submit to [RAARP@wildlife.nh.gov](mailto:RAARP@wildlife.nh.gov) or *NH Wildlife Sightings* as soon as observed. NHFG biologists will be presenting initial results at the NEPARC meeting in July as described above.

### **Fowler's Toads Documented in Boscawen – 1<sup>st</sup> Documentation Since 1938!**

See NHFG *Wildlines* Newsletter - Winter 2012 article on this discovery.

[http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/Nongame/Wildlines\\_issues/Wildlines\\_12\\_%20Winter.pdf](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/Nongame/Wildlines_issues/Wildlines_12_%20Winter.pdf)

## **NH Wildlife Sightings: Web-based reporting**



We encourage you to submit your future reptile and amphibian observations through NH Wildlife Sightings (other species groups can be reported here as well). Mapping tools allow observers to pinpoint the location of their wildlife observation. Digital photographs can be uploaded as part of your submissions. Detailed instructions are available on the website.

<http://nhwildlifesightings.unh.edu/>.

### *Hints to using website:*

- You'll need to sign up for a *User Name* and *password* the first time you visit the site; write these down in a safe place so you can easily access them for future use.
- Mapping the location of your observation - You can either enter coordinates (if a GPS unit was used to record the location of the observation) or use an online mapping tool to zoom in and click on the location of the observation. You will also be asked to estimate how accurate your mapped location is (e.g., how close to reality is the point you placed on the map). Even if you enter your location as GPS coordinates, you should confirm that it was mapped correctly by zooming in using the mapping tool. You won't be able to submit a record using the website without mapping a location. If you have trouble using the mapping tool, you can always submit records via hardcopy (preferably with maps indicating location of observation) or email.
- A '*Site*' is a unique location where an observation was made. Give your '*Site*' a detailed description so that you will know which area the *Site* name refers to. If you have multiple wildlife observations at a single *Site* (defined as within ~ 0.25 acre and within same habitat type; for example a small residential lawn, a vernal pool, or other similarly sized habitat), you will be able to add species observations to previously entered '*Sites*' without remapping the location.
- **Red text** means you are required to enter information for that field.
- Upload your digital photographs if available but limit your photos to the best 2-3 photos per observation. Uploading many large files may slow or reject your submission.
- After you save your observation it should show up in a table on your home page. If you click 'Save Record' and the page doesn't change, make sure that you have entered all required (**red**) fields.
- You can edit your submitted observations until NHFG has reviewed and assigned a vouchering category. However, because this vouchering process can happen at any time, it is critical to verify the accuracy of your record before it is submitted. Once your record is reviewed for vouchering, you will be locked out from editing.

We will continue to refine the website reporting so please let us know if you have suggestions or problems using the site.

**RAARP/ NH Wildlife Sightings Reporting Form**

If you are not using *NH Wildlife Sightings*, we request that you submit your reptile and amphibian observations on the reporting form that was implemented last year. This form is included with this package and available for download on our website. Why? – The new reporting form matches the format of the web-based reporting and the new form is intended to gather all of the important data we use for conservation purposes. Now you can report 2 different species on one form as long as they are at the same location (same habitat type and within ~ 50’ of each other).

**Observations can be submitted to NHFG in any of the following ways:**

- 1) Online (see *NH Wildlife Sightings* information above),
- 2) Email completed reporting form to RAARP@wildlife.nh.gov,
- 3) Mail in hard copy reporting forms to:  
NHFG, Nongame & Endangered Wildlife Program, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord NH 03301.

Call 603-271-2461 for questions.

**NHFG Snake, Frog, Turtle, and Salamander Pages Available**

To assist with identification, NHFG created a web page with information and photographs on snakes, turtles, frogs, and salamanders. Calls of NH frogs can be listened to on this website as well. Also, town distribution maps can be viewed for each species. To find these pages, go to the NHFG website: [Wildnh.com/nongame](http://Wildnh.com/nongame) and click on reptiles and amphibians.

Attached you will find the 2011 report summary.

2011 was a GREAT year!!! Thank you for your participation in RAARP/ NH Wildlife Sightings! I look forward to seeing all of your reports during 2012.

Sincerely,



Michael Marchand  
Nongame & Endangered Wildlife Program

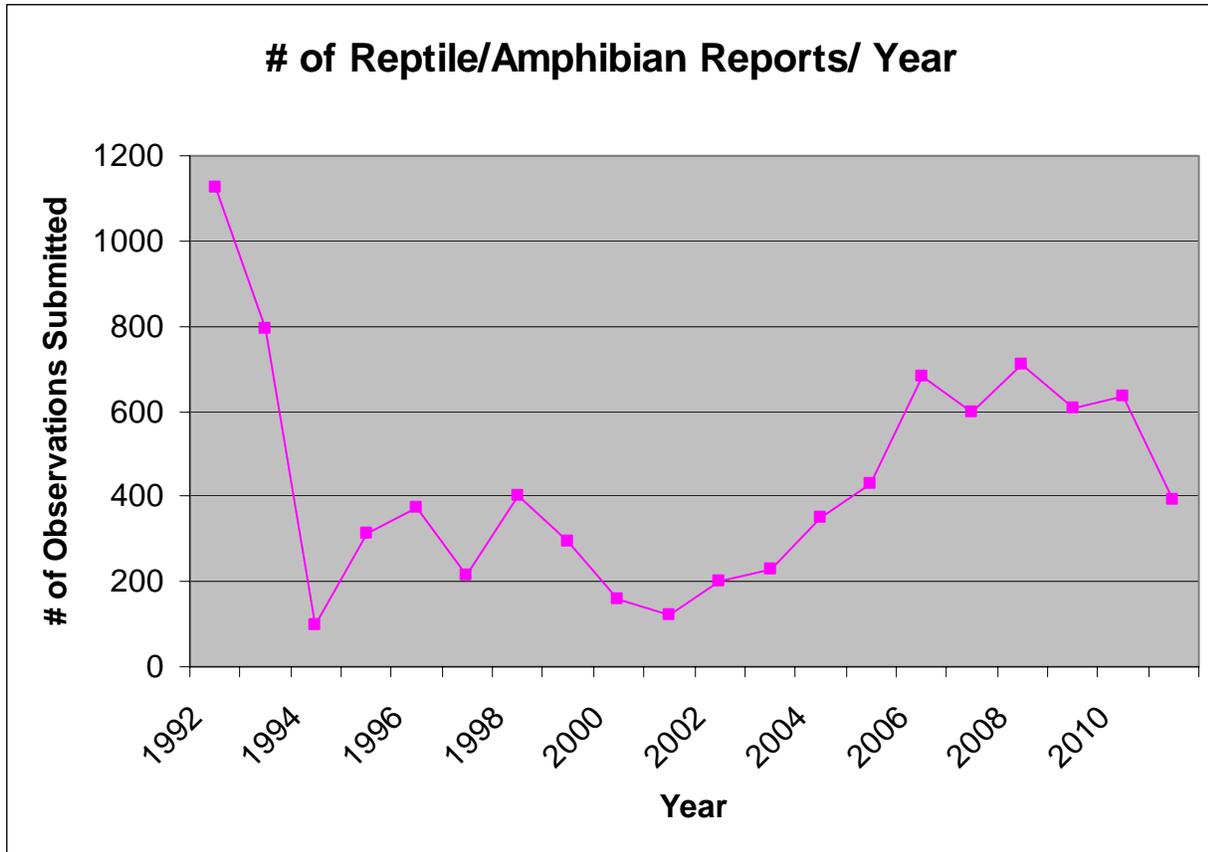




## 2011 Summary Reports



As of March 2012, we have entered 392 reports for 2011 for a total of 9233 records entered since RAARP's start in 1992. **GREAT JOB!!!**



### Observation Summary: 1992 - 2011

During 1992-1993, the largest number of reptile and amphibian reports were submitted to NHFG. Reports during these years were dominated by one species, the spring peeper, because of press around this species. Then from 1994-2003, annual reports ranged from 98 to 402. During 2003, the NHFG Nongame & Endangered Wildlife Program hired a full-time biologist who was able to spend a portion of time coordinating the program. From 2003-2006, the number of reports/year grew to 681. From 2006-2010, reports were relatively level ranging from 600 to 708. During 2011, reports dipped to 392. This dramatic change between 2010 and 2011 was largely a result of reduced reporting of frogs (from 186 to 59), mostly from a few individual reporters who were unable to submit during 2011. It is also possible that the shift in reporting requirements during 2010-2011 confused and/or discouraged some reporters. Also, some reports always come in late; therefore, the number of 2011 reports will increase before the 2012 results come out. Although the raw number of reports decreased from 2010 to 2011, the number of protected species reports (e.g., Blanding's, spotted, wood turtle) remained relatively stable and high. Let's get those numbers back up!

## Summary – 2011 Species Reports

### AMPHIBIANS

Frogs/Toads	# Reports	Salamanders	# Reports
Wood Frog	15	Spotted Salamander	39
Gray Treefrog	8	Eastern Newt	8
Green Frog	8	Redback Salamander	5
American Toad	7	Blue-spotted Salamander	3
Northern Spring Peeper	5	Spring Salamander	3
Pickerel Frog	5	Dusky Salamander	2
Bullfrog	3	Mudpuppy	2
Mink Frog	3	Two-lined Salamander	2
Northern Leopard Frog	3	Marbled Salamander	1
Fowler's Toad	2	Four-toed Salamander	0
		Jefferson Salamander	0
		Slimy Salamander	0
<b>TOTAL FROGS</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>TOTAL SALAMANDERS</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>TOTAL AMPHIBIANS</b>			<b>124</b>

### REPTILES

Turtles	# Reports	Snakes	# Reports
Blanding's Turtle	51	Milk Snake	16
Snapping Turtle	33	Common Garter Snake	15
Eastern Painted Turtle	31	Northern Black Racer	14
Wood Turtle	31	Northern Water Snake	14
Spotted Turtle	27	Smooth Green Snake	9
Musk turtle (Stinkpot)	3	Eastern Ribbon Snake	7
Eastern Box Turtle	0	Eastern Hognose Snake	5
		Ringneck Snake	5
Red-eared slider (non-native)	0	Brown Snake	4
		Redbelly Snake	3
		Timber Rattlesnake	0
<b>TOTAL TURTLES</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>TOTAL SNAKES</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>TOTAL REPTILES</b>			<b>268</b>

**\*NOTE:** The numbers reported above represent the number of observations REPORTED. These observations have not been validated and these reports do not necessarily represent distinct populations.

Reports received were not related to how common a species is in the state. For instance, Blanding's, spotted, and wood turtles are far less common in NH than painted, snapping, or musk turtles but we received as many or more reports of these species during 2011. This is partially resulting from some observers focusing their reports on the most unusual sightings; which is perfectly acceptable. However, we would like to increase the number of reports for all species. Even some of the common snakes (e.g., brown, ringneck, & redbelly snakes) get very few reports in a given year and we still don't have a clear picture of the species distribution in NH.

### **Species Highlights**

The number of turtle reports, especially Blanding’s, spotted, and wood turtles, was tremendous. We even had one report of 8 Blanding’s turtles basking on one log – this is largely unheard of elsewhere. These reports are invaluable for NHFG as we develop conservation measures for these species. Keep up the good work! We also had an increase in black racer snake reports, presumably a result of our increased press associated with our ongoing research project.

We also received a documented photo of an adult marbled salamander from Brookline, the towns first – very exciting! Thanks Steve.

### **Best Photo**

We received many excellent photos of reptiles and amphibians in action. The photograph to the right was one of our favorites. This blue-spotted salamander (or hybrid with Jefferson salamander) with eggs was photographed in Deerfield by Robin White. The eggs are not those of the salamander but are likely the salamander’s next meal – slug eggs – another good reason to keep healthy amphibians around your yard.

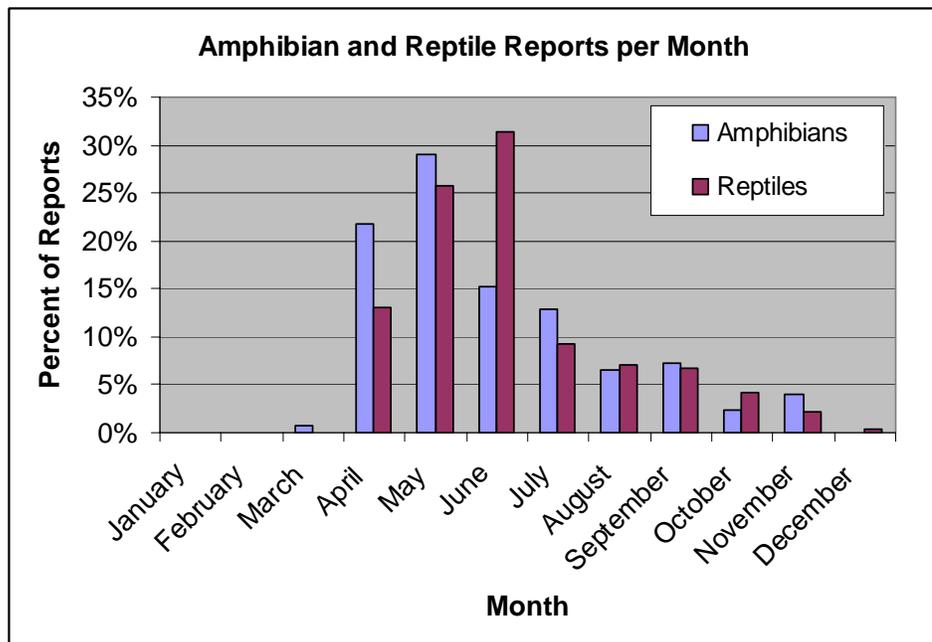


*Photograph by Robin White*

### **Seasonal Variation in Reports of Amphibians and Reptiles**

During 2011, most reports of amphibians and reptiles occurred between April – June. Amphibian reports started slightly earlier (March – April). This pulse of reports is probably due to a combination of these species becoming more active and people becoming more active after a long winter. Reptile

observations spiked in May - June. This increase in reports is largely due to nesting turtles being easily observed on land. It will be interesting comparing reports for 2012. The mild winter and warm early temperatures triggered early activity by some species and we have already received several reports for February and March.



## Targets for 2012

### Check Town Distribution Maps on NHFG Website and Help Fill in the Gaps!

#### ***Frogs/Toads:***

Only a few Mink frogs were reported during 2011. Mink frogs have a northerly distribution (north of the White Mountains). I encourage our northern NH RAARP volunteers to report this species and if you don't live up north, it would make a great get-away weekend. Listen for their call in June and early July (sounds like hitting 2 boards together). If you are fortunate to capture one, try to take a good photo!! Mink frogs can look very similar to our more common green frog.

Fowler's toads can be difficult to verify; try to listen for their distinct calls during spring (calls can be listened to on the NHFG website). NHFG documented one new occurrence in Boscawen during 2011. Other sites surely exist and are just waiting to be identified!

We need verified reports of Leopard frogs; photos are crucial!! Most reports of Leopard frogs turn out to be Pickerel and green frogs. Focus searches during late summer in floodplains, fields, and agricultural areas along rivers. See the NHFG website for description of species.



Northern Leopard Frog



Pickerel Frog

#### ***Salamanders:***

Jefferson and blue-spotted salamanders – breed in vernal pools in early spring.

Four-toed salamanders – associated with sphagnum wetlands.

Marbled salamander - State endangered species; be sure to take a photo if you come across one of these and **call NHFG ASAP (603-271-2461)**. Most likely to be found in: Hollis, Brookline, Milford and Hinsdale.

Spring & dusky salamanders – live in/near streams and seeps statewide.

Mudpuppies – known from Connecticut River but we need more records to determine distribution.

#### ***Turtles:***

Blanding's turtle - have been among the top reported species for the last several years. This is probably due in part to the species large size, and movement patterns which bring it into frequent contact with residential areas and roads. Keep those reports coming!

Keep the reports flowing for Spotted and Wood turtles. Even Musk turtles are underrepresented in RAARP reports.

We're still searching for our first Eastern Box turtle population! We get occasional reports of individuals but still don't know of any locations where more than one individual has been observed. wild Eastern box turtles are difficult to verify because of the number of released pets over the years. If you see one, **call NHFG ASAP (603-271-2461)**.

Keep a look out for Red-eared sliders and other non-native turtles. Non-native turtles can compete with our native species and potentially introduce diseases. Reports of non-native species are just as important.

***Snakes:***

Hognose snakes are state endangered and their sandy habitat continues to be developed in southern New Hampshire. To protect this species, we need to document the best places where they still occur. Photos are critical.

We initiated a Black racer study during 2010 and the press associated with that project resulted in a number of new records. Continue to send these reports quickly after observed.

Ribbon snakes and smooth green snake were listed in the NH Wildlife Action Plan as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Photographs are critical for Ribbon snakes. Check out the NHFG website to help with identification.



Ribbon snake - not common



Garter snake – common statewide