Eastern Red-back Salamander

The Eastern red-backed salamander, *Plethodon cinerus*, is our most common salamander. There are two color phases, the red-striped and the “leadback”, which has no red stripe on its back. These creatures are shy and are usually hiding under leaf litter. They can reach lengths of 4 ½ inches, but often smaller ones are found. They are lungless, and breathe through their skin!

Unlike most amphibians who hatch out of eggs laid in the water, the red-backed spends its entire life on the forest floor. They lay 6 to 9 eggs under rotting logs and leaf litter where they make their homes. Then they tend them and defend them from predators until they hatch. Each salamander maintains a territory which it defines with a special scent.

These salamanders feed upon invertebrates such as spiders, millipedes, beetles and larvae, springtails, mites, worms and slugs. They in turn are food for large spiders, centipedes, and beetles as well as shrews, snakes and larger salamanders such as reds and spotteds.

How to Find!

Red-backed salamanders are commonly found under logs, rocks, and the leaf litter on the forest floor! They are very delicate and may lose their tails if disturbed, so they must be handled very carefully. Always return them to their home after your visit.

Crossword Puzzle:

Across
2. Each salamander maintains its own
4. These are laid on land and not in water
6. An animal which eats these salamanders
8. They mark their territory using this
10. They feed upon

Down
1. Salamanders belong to this group
3. The darker color phase of this salamander is called
5. These salamanders breathe through their
7. They lay their eggs under
9. Their habitat is the

Answers:
1. Amphibians
2. Territory
3. Leadbacked
4. Eggs
5. Skin
6. Snakes
7. Logs
8. Scents
9. Invertebrates
10. Forest

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