

GEHR Watershed Minute #37

Marbled Salamanders: (231 words)

Marbled Salamanders are very secretive and unusual. These 4 inch long black and white amphibians spend most of their life under logs or in burrows underground, and are also called mole salamanders. They are strong predators that eat worms, insects, centipedes, snails, slugs, and the eggs and larvae of other amphibians. And they can live for 10 years or more.

While most amphibians breed in the spring and summer, Marbled Salamanders breed in freezing temperatures and snow from September through December. Adults come out from their damp woodlands burrows on rainy and snowy nights and seek mates in seasonally flooded areas that are dry in the fall but flood in the winter and early spring.

Females lay eggs in clusters of up to 120 under logs or in clumps of vegetation in low areas that are likely to flood during winter rains. They will then stay with the eggs until the nest is inundated with the rising waters of the seasonal pool.

The marbled salamander larvae gain a size advantage by feeding and growing for several months before other amphibians breed in the spring. Larvae typically mature in as little as two months.

Marbled salamanders have recently been found in Hamilton and Egg Harbor Townships. They are currently listed as a Species of Special Concern by the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program for their inherent vulnerability to environmental deterioration.