

The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

Update

2025

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**For the Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative
(FEMC)**

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Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas (2025)

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Background

Localized intensive monitoring

Amphibian monitoring at Mt. Mansfield provides locally intensive data on a subset of amphibian species. While these data are particularly valuable and allow us to see year-to-year population changes of the monitored species at Mt. Mansfield and provide local information on abnormalities and natural history, they do not allow us to see more widespread changes in the distribution and/or natural history (calling times, migration dates, etc.) of the full range of reptiles and amphibians statewide. Nor do they allow us to see changes in forest health or the impacts of forest fragmentation and consumption on a larger scale. In addition, there is a real need to get reptile and amphibian natural history and management information out to a wide variety of landowners, land managers, and other natural resource professionals.

Statewide extensive monitoring

The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas is an effort begun in 1994 by the Reptile and Amphibian Scientific Advisory Group for the Vermont Endangered Species Committee. The atlas project initially began as an effort to gather data for use by this committee. Data were needed in order to make informed recommendations regarding the appropriate status and conservation of these species. Since then, the goals have widened to incorporate education, citizen involvement, and dissemination of information. The ultimate goal of the Atlas is to gather and disseminate data on the reptiles and amphibians of Vermont in a way that involves and informs Vermont individuals and organizations so that they will become more informed and effective stewards of wildlife habitat. The Atlas has grown since its inception in 1994 to involve over 7,000 volunteers and thirty-five private organizations and government agencies. With the help of organizations, agencies, volunteers, and staff members, we are continuing to collect information and broaden our knowledge base regarding the natural history, distribution, and effective conservation of Vermont's reptiles and amphibians. By providing the best and most up-to-date information on the conservation of these species in Vermont, we have become a trusted party in many conservation activities throughout the state.

Goals for the 2025 Atlas work

The goals for the 2025 Atlas work were: (1) to gather data for the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas; (2) to update and improve the Atlas website, Facebook page, and other outreach efforts (3) to review and enter current and previous years' herpetological reports; (4) to forward electronic files of the most recent calendar year's data to the VT Nongame and Natural Heritage Program; (5) to continue to prepare all data and original reports and photos for long-term electronic archiving through the assigning of latitude and longitude coordinates to all reports in our database; (6) to update all our reptile and amphibian distribution maps (7) to respond to daily requests for information on the identification, conservation, natural history, and management of Vermont's reptiles and amphibians.

We were also required to submit this report and the most recent full-year's data to FEMC in the format of an Excel spreadsheet(s) with appropriate labels and metadata (for tabular data). The data will be added to the FEMC project library and made available to other researchers (subject to accessibility restrictions). The written report will be posted to the FEMC website. The data have been sent. This is the final report for the statewide Atlas for 2025.

Contributed records

Between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, 890 contributors provided 4,816 new Vermont records that were entered into the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Database. This brings the total number of reports in our database to 131,999.

The 2025 reports included 127 verified Vermont reports of S1 species, 137 verified reports of S2 species, 1,960 verified reports of S3 species, 207 verified reports of S4 species, and 2,289 verified reports of S5 species. Additional

reports also include unverified and negative records, amphibian and reptile road-crossing locations, vernal pools, turtle egg-laying sites, snake dens, and other significant herptile habitats. Sightings came from 264 towns (all but two), cities, grants, gores, and all Vermont counties. They included all of Vermont's native species except **Boreal Chorus Frog** (*Pseudacris maculata*, probably extirpated from Vermont, last reported in 1999), **Fowler's Toad** (*Anaxyrus fowleri*, last reported in 2021), and **North American Racer** (*Coluber constrictor*, last documented in 2024). Fowler's Toad was reported from an island in the Connecticut River of New Hampshire, but not from Vermont. All new S1-S3 reports were exported to Jodi Shippee of Vermont Fish and Wildlife on January 19, 2026.

Exotic species

Every year, we receive a handful of reports of non-native reptiles and amphibians that were either released or escaped pets, or they were accidentally transported via boats, trucks, RVs, and cars. We received our first-ever report of a **Northwestern Salamander** (*Ambystoma gracile*). It was found in Monkton and came to Vermont with a shipment of shrubs from Oregon. We also entered our first report of a **Southern Alligator Lizard** (*Elgaria multicarinata*). It was found in a house in Bridport. All other non-native herptiles reported this year have also been reported in previous years. We received our fifth and sixth reports of **African Spurred Tortoises** (*Centrochelys sulcata*). One was in Cavendish and the other in Lyndon. We received our third report of a **Russian Tortoise** (*Testudo horsfieldii*). This one was apparently living under a porch in Milton. All the tortoises are clearly escaped pets. We received our fourth report of a **Brown Anole** (*Anolis sagrei*). It was found in Johnson, and it apparently hitched a ride on a truck from Florida. We also received our fourth report of a **Mediterranean House Gecko** (*Hemidactylus turcicus*). This is the third Mediterranean House Gecko reported from a heated warehouse in Middlebury. It is possible that there is a breeding population in that warehouse. Lastly, seven **Pond Sliders** (*Trachemys scripta*) were reported. This brings the total of Pond Slider reports in our database to 27. This year, one was reported from the Intervale in Burlington, two reports came from Lake Runnemedede in Windsor, three more from Winooski, and the seventh one from Buckner Preserve in West Haven. This is a common pet turtle species that has become invasive in southern New England. As our climate continues to warm, they could become invasive in Vermont.

Hypothetical species

We received two new reports of **Eastern Box Turtles** (*Terrapene carolina*). Based on their locations (Red Rocks Park in South Burlington and Crawford Forest in Waterbury), these were both likely released pets.

New locations for S1 species (statewide)

We received a report and photo of a **Spotted Turtle** (*Clemmys guttata*) in Starksboro. It is the first documented report from that town. We only know of three populations of this species in Vermont.

We also got reports documenting three new sites for **Common Five-lined Skink** (*Plethodon fasciatus*). All of these new sites were in Benson and within two miles of a previously known population on the shore of Lake Champlain.

Targeted survey efforts

During this period, we personally visited 98 towns (or cities, gores, or grants) to gather new records. Many survey trips focused on those "towns" (including cities, gores, and grants) that have had the least survey effort. This is usually the result of low numbers of residents. Other trips focused on species that are not often reported by citizen scientists. These include the **Northern Dusky Salamander** (*Desmognathus fuscus*) and **Spring Salamander** (*Gyrinophilus porphyriticus*). We filled in over 165 gaps (species/town combinations) with these trips. We also helped Luke Groff of VT Fish and Wildlife with an annual search for **North American Racers** in Guilford and Vernon.

No reptiles or amphibians were killed or harmed during any of the above activities.

Review of data

As usual, all these reports have been personally reviewed by me or one of my assistants and when at all possible, the contributors have been personally contacted and thanked. Scores of ID and conservation questions have been personally responded to as well.

Field trips, courses, presentations, and media outreach

During this time, I met with writers and press for a number of interviews and news pieces on Vermont herptiles. These include two Wildlife Watch shows, an episode on Across the Fence for WCAX TV, and our annual interview on Vermont herptiles for Vermont Public's Vermont Edition.

The trainings for staff of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) did not take place this year due to Federal Government cutbacks, but we did do a training series called Habitats and Highways for the Vermont Agency of Transportation and Fish and Wildlife.

Presentations and field trips include both a presentation and field trip for the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, field trips and/or presentations for the Lewis Creek Association, the Salisbury Conservation Commission, the New Haven Conservation Commission, the Dummerston Conservation Commission, Vermont Coverts, Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, Farm and Wilderness Conservation, the Dead Creek Wildlife Festival, and the Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival. In addition, my assistant, Ira Powsner, provided presentations and/or field trips for the Vermont Institute of Natural Science and the UVM Herpetology Club, and Kate Kelly presented to the Hinesburg Conservation Commission and nearby residents.

Data sharing

This past year, we provided Vermont distribution records of herptile species to the Vermont Endangered Species Committee, The Nature Conservancy of Vermont, Vermont Fish and Wildlife, a steering committee for the Monkton Town Forest, and the Watershed Center. Wood Turtle records were again provided to Kiley Briggs of the Orienne Society.

I continue to be aggressive about providing data to contributors from target towns where we need more data. What I provide to these people is a list of common reptiles and amphibians that are expected to be in their towns but have not yet been photo documented, or species for which we need updated reports and photos. For towns that have a good chance of providing habitat for rarer species, I include our list of herptiles that should always be documented. As in previous years, we provided this sort of data to residents of over twenty towns. Many of these exchanges resulted in new town records.

The Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative and the Colby Hill Ecological Project continue to get exported monitoring data and reports.

Significant herptile sightings were shared with state herpetologist Luke Groff as they were received, and reports of all S1-S3 herptiles are forwarded to Vermont Fish and Wildlife annually.

Coordinates

All our new records are entered into our database with latitude and longitude coordinates for point mapping. Many smartphone photos show us almost exactly where the photos came from. This was not always the case. Older records most often came with physical descriptions of roads or landmarks describing the location. We have now finished the reviewing and assigning of lat longs to all reports of S1 through S4 species. Records with lat longs assigned now total more than 121,000 of 132,000. Molly Parren and Ira Powsner are now adding lat longs to older reports of S5 species. All towns in Addison, Grand Isle, Orleans, and Rutland Counties have been finished, along with all the towns bordering Lake Champlain. We are very pleased with this progress. This project will be ongoing for a couple more years.

Update of the Website/Atlas

Monthly updates have continued to be made to our website. We have recently updated all of our distribution maps and posted them on our website. We have also printed and distributed a printed copy of the same material: The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas, 2025 Update. This is a major project that we undertake approximately every five years. I also send out periodic Herp Update newsletters to a group of over 500 people. These Updates get added to our website so that they are available to anyone.

Mentoring Conservation Biologists

Every year, we invite some new (usually) young conservation biologists to work with us in the office, the field, or both. Many of these young conservationists continue to make significant conservation contributions for the duration of their careers. This past year, we had Molly Parren and Ira Powsner working with us, in addition to our regular staff (Kate Kelly, Erin Talmage, and Cindy Brown), and a new volunteer (Dr. Pam Groves) is now helping us assign lat long coordinates.

Working with Vermont Fish and Wildlife and the Reptile and Amphibian Scientific Advisory Group

State Wildlife Action Plan and State Ranks

The Herp Atlas and the HerpSAG helped with the update of the State's Wildlife Action Plan. As a result of this process and the use of our threat matrix, the state ranks of Jefferson Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*) and Four-toed Salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*) were changed from S2 to S3, and the Ring-necked Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*) was changed from S4 to S5. The status of the North American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) was also reviewed, but we decided it should not be changed from S5 at this time.

Recommended regulation updates

Pond Slider

As a result of an increasing number of reports of non-native Pond Sliders found in the wild in Vermont, Rosy Metcalfe gathered and summarized information from other states on how they were dealing with the threat (or reality) of this invasive turtle. Her summary was sent to Fish & Wildlife, recommendations were made, and legislation was introduced in 2024. Legislation prohibiting the import, sale, and release of Pond Sliders became law in 2025 and went into effect on July 1 of this year.

Herp Protection

As a result of our efforts in conjunction with the HerpSAG and Vermont Fish and Wildlife, a bill to provide protection for all unlisted Vermont reptiles and amphibians was introduced in the fall of 2024. It became law in 2025, and it goes into effect in 2027. This is a precedent-setting bill that has been praised at the national level.

Additional funding and matching requirements

Additional funding for 2025 for our statewide Atlas came from the South Lake Champlain Fund, the Lintilhac Foundation, VT Fish and Wildlife, and an online fundraiser. For those sources of funding that required a match, it has been provided by my (Jim Andrews) volunteer hours.

Thanks

We really appreciate your continued support.