

Marvelous Marbled Migration

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Inspired by “The Great Migration Challenge” activity from Flying WILD: An Educator’s Guide to Celebrating Birds. Copyright 2020, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. For information on materials and training for Flying WILD and the larger Project WILD program, visit www.projectwild.org.





About Marbled Salamanders

Marbled salamanders (*Ambystoma opacum*) are chunky, medium-sized salamanders in the mole salamander family (Ambystomatidae).

These salamanders can get up to five inches in length and spend much of their adult life underground, coming to the surface in early fall to breed in large masses. Marbled salamanders occur from Florida to southern New Hampshire.

Marbled Salamander Habitat

Typical marbled salamander habitat is deciduous forests with ample leaf litter, rotting logs, and moist soil to live under. Marbled salamanders travel to temporary wetlands known as vernal pools to breed.





About Marbled Salamanders

Marbled salamanders typically breed from Sept-Oct in the northern parts of its range and from Oct-Dec in the southern parts of its range.

On warm, rainy nights during the breeding season, marbled salamanders migrate en-masse to dry, vernal pools to breed and lay eggs. Following breeding, the female will lay 50-200 eggs in areas that should fill with water when it rains. These spots can include a depression under a log, under leaf litter, or in a clump of vegetation.

About Marbled Salamanders

Often, the female will curl her body around the eggs to protect the eggs and to keep them moist until rainwater fills the area. Once covered with water, the larvae will hatch a few days later. If there is not enough rain, then larvae will not hatch until spring!

Typically, the larvae will undergo metamorphosis and turn into salamanders in about 3-6 months. The young salamanders will then travel to their adult habitats to live underground.



BBC's Life in Cold Blood: The Marbled Salamander





Forest to the Backyard

Start Here

1. Eek! A shrew wants to eat you! You flatten yourself to hide in the soil. Roll the die and move ahead the number of stations indicated, while ducking.



2. Good news! There are so many insects and worms under the leaf litter. Smack your mouth 10 times while saying 'YUM' and move ahead 5 stations.

3. Ugh! It's cold. Because it's too cold to move, sit down, shiver, and count to 30. Slowly move ahead one station.

6. Scientists catch you for research. They put a colored tag on you and set you free. Mark your hand with a marker and move ahead 2 stations.

5. You cross through a backyard and a dog finds you! The dog tries to grab you but gets a mouth full of poison when it grabs your tail. Wiggle your hips 10 times to shake it off and move ahead 1 station.

4. Well, it's warm enough to move, but it's too dry. Curl up, count to 20, and then move ahead 2 stations.

7. Someone rolls a log the wrong way, and it almost crushes you. Eek! Hop in 1 leg in a circle, count to 40, then move ahead 4 stations.



8. Oh, you found the perfect log with a ton of delicious insects! Do a happy dance and say 'Yum' 10 times. Roll the die, then move ahead that number.

9. It's raining, it's pouring, and you love it! Do your best happy dance, roll the die, and move ahead that number of stations.



Migrate



Backyard to the Vernal Pool

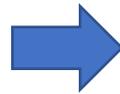
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10. *Ohh*, the temperature just dropped. Hunker down, count to 10, and move backward one station.

11. Hey! There is a fence where you want to go. Walk back & forth 5 times, searching for an opening. You only have enough strength to move ahead one space.



12. Whew! You almost get hit by a car, but you get out of the way just in time. Scurry back 3 stations to escape the road.



15. Ugh. Someone sprayed their yard with pesticides, and it has made you sick. Groan, hold your belly, count to 10 and go back 1 station.

WARNING
PESTICIDE
APPLIED TO
LAWN HARMFUL
TO PETS

14. A lovely, warm rain makes ideal migration conditions. Roll the die and move ahead that number of stations. 😊

13. Wow! Someone planted a wonderful native plant garden and guess what: it has insects! Rub your stomach 15 times and move ahead 4 stations.

16. A raccoon catches you and eats you. The game is over for you, SORRY! You died. Die dramatically. ☠️

17. Oh no! You just fell into a pool. Start 'swimming' and count to 35. Then, roll the die and move ahead the number of stations indicated.

18. Oh, goodness. You just got hit by a car. The game is over for you- SORRY! Dramatically die.



Migrate

To the Vernal Pool

Continue

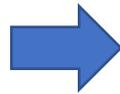
19. Good news!!! A warm rain helps you move ahead 5 stations.



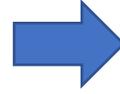
20. After walking for several hours, you find some wet leaves filled with slugs. Take a few minutes to rest, eat a slug, and then move ahead 4 stations.



21. Uh oh! A person moved you off the road but placed you down the street in the wrong spot. Go back 2 stations.



24. Yay! You have reached the edge of the vernal pool. Take a quick nap, grab a bite to eat and then crawl to the finish!



23. Uh oh! You lost an important breeding spot when the vernal pool you use has been replaced by a house. Go back 1 station.

22. Boo! A person found you and decided to take you home and place you in an aquarium. You don't get fed the right foods, and you die.



25. Great job, you made it to the vernal pool! Time to lay some eggs under wet leaves and wait for a good rain.

