



Foundation for the Conservation of Salamanders Daniel M. DiGiacomo Grant

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Project: Status Assessment of the Eastern Mud Salamander in New Jersey

Summary: The Black Run Preserve re-opened in May as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Fieldwork was conducted weekly throughout May and June. The new area of seemingly suitable mud salamander habitat identified in April was surveyed several times. Muck raking in this area uncovered a female four-toed salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*) guarding eggs, concealed within thick sphagnum moss. Also observed were several pickerel frogs and a wood frog; two frog species not typically associated with Pine Barrens habitat and never personally observed by myself in the rest of the preserve. The new habitat area is located at the extreme western limit of the Pine Barrens, which may allow these fringe species to enter just beyond the border. Interestingly, herpetologist Roger Conant stated that the original 1953 Black Run mud salamander sighting location “lies within, but very close to the western edge of, the Pine Barrens.” With those details matching, more survey time will be dedicated to this western edge of the preserve. Funnel traps captured a northern water snake, green frog tadpoles, carpenter frog tadpoles, southern leopard frog tadpoles, banded sunfish, and eastern mudminnows. A four-toed salamander was also observed under one of the plywood cover boards.