

## Quakertown Swamp: An important wildlife habitat

Quakertown Swamp has long been recognized as an exceptional wetland habitat, encompassing an area of approximately 518 acres of land in Richland, East Rockhill and West Rockhill Townships, of which Heritage Conservancy owns and preserves 70 acres. Quakertown Swamp is one of Heritage Conservancy's Lasting Landscapes®, an initiative that unites open space protection and historic preservation comprehensively at the landscape level. The protection of this vast area of contiguous land helps to sustain this important natural resource for the benefit of the entire ecosystem, which includes an abundant amphibian population.

When salamanders and other amphibians in the Quakertown Swamp awake from a long winter's nap, they embark on a dangerous trek through the night across an unforgiving wasteland, or what we humans refer to as "a busy street." Their mission: to seek out vernal pools (temporary pools of water that typically fill up during wet spring months) on the other side of the road in order to breed.



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HeritageConservancy.org • 215-345-7020

*To preserve and protect our natural and  
historic heritage*

Heritage Conservancy has facilitated in the preservation of more than 13,500 acres (and counting!) of farmland, forest, watersheds, wildlife habitats and open space in this region. This land will remain intact for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations. Heritage Conservancy also identifies, documents, and protects structures that characterize this region and its rich history by recognizing their architectural integrity and historical significance. Visit our website or reach out to us at 215-345-7020 to learn more about how we are helping to provide a better quality of life for our community and how you can get involved.

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This project was funded in part by a grant from the  
The Erwin J. and Gertrude K. Neusch Fund.



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Thank you to our volunteers who helped our friends cross the road and record their numbers. Thank you to Marlin Corn, Shannon Fredebaugh-Siller, Art Hulse and Bill Moses, for contributing the photographs for this brochure. Photos are copyrighted.

*Cover photo: Spotted Salamander*



# Amphibians

## OF THE QUAKERTOWN SWAMP





# Helping our friends



*American Toad*

## LIFE HISTORY

The word amphibian means double life, which highlights the fact that most amphibians

require both land and water at different stages of their lives to survive and reproduce. Types of amphibians include salamanders and frogs, and most are born in water as larval forms and eventually undergo metamorphosis, changing into an adult form. At this point, many species leave the water to live out a majority of their lives in a terrestrial environment, but they must return to water to breed and lay eggs.



*Red-Spotted Newt*

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE

Amphibians are excellent bioindicators, which means that their presence is an indication of the health of the surrounding environment. They have permeable skin that can easily absorb pollutants from both air and water, making them very sensitive to any environmental changes such as a shift in air or water quality. A drop in population could be an indication of the degradation of the health of the ecosystem.

Beyond acting as canaries in the coal mine for human health, they consume insects, especially

mosquitoes, making them an important regulator for mosquito populations. They also provide important nutrient cycling in the ecosystem, and they improve soils by burrowing.

## THE GREAT MIGRATION

Each spring, thousands of salamanders and other amphibians travel across busy Quakertown roads to get to the vernal pools on the other side in order to breed. This mass exodus is risky even on a good night, but ideal crossing weather consists of temperatures near 40 degrees along with heavy rains, which means that cars don't often see our determined friends.

## QUAKERTOWN SWAMP AMPHIBIAN RESCUE PARTNERSHIP (QSARP)

Until a few years ago, the salamanders were going it alone and putting their lives at risk at the fate of an untimely car passing by. Fortunately, Heritage Conservancy, Richland Township and their local police department, East Rockhill Township and their road crew, and a group of concerned citizens joined together to rally behind these critical critters and help provide them with safe passage.



*Spring Peeper*

Each year, the Quakertown Swamp Amphibian Rescue Partnership ensures safe travels for hundreds of salamanders and other amphibians on their journey by closing roads and keeping cars at bay.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### Be on the lookout for crossing

**amphibians:** QSARP can't be there for every crossing, so keep an eye out in late winter and early spring on rainy evenings for smaller crossings. During this time, drivers should be aware and use caution.

**Alert us to crossings:** The amphibian crossing schedules can be unpredictable and sporadic. If you see a mass crossing in progress, contact Heritage Conservancy at 215-345-7020. If we stay informed, we can help protect them.



*Marbled Salamander*

If you'd like more information on the Quakertown Swamp Amphibian Rescue Partnership, or to learn more about the importance of these amphibians, please visit [HeritageConservancy.org](http://HeritageConservancy.org).

# cross the road