

Legal Protections for Local Reptiles and Amphibians

Before reptiles and amphibians were a common sight in pet stores, most people who wanted to keep a reptile or amphibian as a pet simply went out and caught one. But times have changed. More and more species become threatened or endangered—and, more to the point, protected by law. Residents of the Ottawa/Gatineau region should be aware of the provincial laws protecting species native to this area.

Ontario protects most reptiles and amphibians by listing them as “specially protected wildlife” or “game wildlife”. Animals in either category may not be kept, bought, sold or bred without a licence. In **Quebec**, private individuals cannot normally acquire a licence for protected animals.

For those few species that aren’t protected, **Ontario** requires a small game hunting licence to collect them from the wild, though there are no restrictions on keeping them. **Quebec** exempts certain species—garter snakes and some amphibians may be caught without a licence—but imposes quotas. See the chart at right.

In the end, though, wild animals make for very poor pets: their temperament and health are never as good as reptiles and amphibians that have been bred in captivity specifically for the pet trade.

Disclaimer: We’ve done our best, but we might have made mistakes in the information we present or the way we’ve interpreted it. Please contact either the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources or the Société de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec for definitive information.

Legal Status of Local Species

Species	Ontario	Quebec
Northern Ring-necked Snake	NP (SG)	P
Black Rat Snake	P	-
Eastern Milk Snake	P	P
Smooth Green Snake	P	P
Northern Water Snake	P	P
Brown Snake	NP (SG)	P
Northern Red-bellied Snake	NP (SG)	P
Northern Ribbon Snake	NP (SG)	-
Common Garter Snake	NP (SG)	NP (L2)
Five-lined Skink	P	-
Eastern Spiny Softshell	P	P
Midland Painted Turtle	P	P
Common Snapping Turtle	P	P
Spotted Turtle	P	P
Wood Turtle	P	P
Blanding’s Turtle	P	P
Common Map Turtle	P	P
Common Musk Turtle	P	P
American Toad	NP (SG)	NP
Gray Treefrog	P	P
Spring Peeper	NP (SG)	P
Chorus Frog	NP (SG)	P
Bullfrog	P	NP (L2/SE)
Green Frog	NP (SG)	NP (SE)
Pickereel Frog	NP (SG)	P
Northern Leopard Frog	NP (SG)	NP (SE)
Mink Frog	NP (SG)	NP
Wood Frog	NP (SG)	NP
Eastern Newt	NP (SG)	NP (L2)
Common Mudpuppy	NP (SG)	NP (L2)
Blue-spotted Salamander	P	P
Spotted Salamander	P	P
Two-lined Salamander	P	P
Four-toed Salamander	P	P
Red-backed Salamander	P	P

Legend:

- P Protected by provincial law
- NP Not protected by provincial law
- (SG) Small game hunting permit required
- (SE) Hunting in season only
- (L2) Limit of two specimens of this species

Note for Quebec: No more than 10 specimens of native species *total*.



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