

THE ARBORETUM AT PENN STATE



# EASTERN HELLBENDER

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or protected veteran status.

© The Pennsylvania State University 2017 U.Ed. AGR 17-73



Corner of Park Ave. and Bigler Road • University Park, PA 16802  
[arboretum.psu.edu](http://arboretum.psu.edu)   
[facebook.com/pennstatearboretum](https://facebook.com/pennstatearboretum)



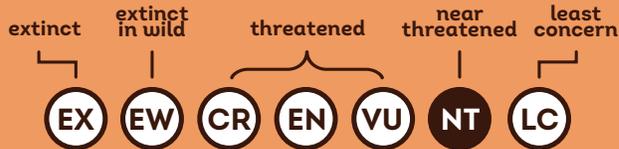
# EASTERN HELLBENDER

## DESCRIPTION

A fully aquatic salamander, the Eastern hellbender is distinctly recognizable by its flat head, slimy body, and spotted coloration. Although able to swim, hellbenders prefer walking along stream bottoms, hiding under flat rocks in shallow water. This salamander is a habitat specialist, able to survive only in very specific conditions, making it easily found and captured by collectors and resulting in its decline. Generally nocturnal, the Eastern hellbender can be found along the Susquehanna River in southern New York and Pennsylvania.

**NAME:** *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*

## CONSERVATION STATUS:



**SIZE:** 2 feet

**WEIGHT:** 4 pounds

**GROUP TERM:** none (solitary)

**NUMBER OF YOUNG:** 140–450

**HABITAT:** swift-flowing streams

**LIFESPAN:** 25–30 years

## DISTRIBUTION:



## DIET

Crayfish are a staple of the Eastern hellbender’s diet, although small fish, insects, worms, and even other small hellbenders may be consumed.

## THREATS

While larvae and juveniles may fall prey to snapping turtles, water snakes, and predatory fish, adult hellbenders are most susceptible to habitat loss and human capture.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Eastern hellbenders are also known as “mud dogs,” “grampus,” and “Allegheny alligators.”
- Like all salamanders, the Eastern hellbender has a four-stage life cycle, growing from egg to larva, juvenile to adult.
- Eastern hellbenders use their skin to absorb oxygen from the water, rather than breathing air through their lungs.

“Eastern Hellbender.” Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.  
Terrell, Kimberly, Dr. “Hellbender.” Wildlife Library. National Wildlife Federation, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.