

NORTH AUGUSTA'S BRICK POND PARK

Amphibians & Reptiles

Identifying Animals in Brick Pond Park

All of the creatures you see here are living in Brick Pond Park. If you see any wild animals in the park, try see if you can identify it. The best way to do that is to remember:

- what colors did you see on the animal
- the size
- unique behavior (example: climbed straight up)
- features that are different (like a short, pointed, or flat nose)

Jot the information down as soon as you can. The more information you jot down, the more likely you will find out exactly what the animal you saw was.

Then when you have the time, look in a field guide for reptiles and amphibians. You can find them in your library or book store. Before long, you will be able to quickly identify an animal just by looking at it. Learn more about reptiles and amphibians on our website at www.northaugusta.net. We welcome your emails telling us what you identified living in the park. This will help us in our efforts to monitor the park.

Enjoy your Visit!

Alligators!

Alligators currently populate Brick Pond Park, the ponds in and around the River Club Golf course, the wetlands within River North subdivision and, of course, the Savannah River. It is common to see alligators sunning on logs, the edges of ponds, or banks of the river.

An average alligator is 13 feet long and weighs 800 pounds. They are considered an adult when they reach six feet. Juveniles eat a variety of small invertebrates such as insects, small fish and frogs. As they grow larger, their dietary range increases to include large prey. An alligator's lifespan is usually estimated to be in the range of 50 years or more.

Common sense measures can ensure the safety of both humans and pets visiting Brick Pond Park. The City of North Augusta has a "leash law" which prohibits free ranging pets preventing them from swimming in areas frequented by alligators. Both children and adults should maintain a safe distance from all wild animals. Also, do not annoy the alligators and be cautious around them. **NEVER feed wild animals!** They will come to expect humans as a food provider instead of a creature to be feared. Enjoy observing these majestic animals.

American alligator



Amphibians & Reptiles of Brick Pond Park

To provide balance to the overall wetland system, it is important that healthy populations of reptiles and amphibians exist in Brick Pond Park wetlands. Restoring the wetlands to provide food, shelter, and habitat for reptiles and amphibians is critical to the success of the project over time. When providing for the needs of these creatures, the city had to consider all stages of their development. Many of them spend some part of their life in the water and also part of it on land. For example, amphibians such as frogs and salamanders must have water to rear their young. Upland habitat protection is critical to their long term success. Brick Pond Park was designed to include upland habitat preservation, buffer areas, and shallow edge cover. Wetland edges were planted with many ground covers and native vegetation that provide cover and habitat for insects (a primary food source during the aquatic stage of development). Additionally, areas along the upland side of the ponds were left undisturbed so that these areas are preserved. Construction of the park was done in phases so that any disturbances that were required, were conducted one stage at a time allowing the resident amphibians and reptiles time to move into our out of an area that was being constructed.

Amphibians are cold blooded vertebrate animals with moist permeable skin, the frogs, toads, and salamanders. They lay shell-less eggs in water that hatch into gilled aquatic larvae that later metamorphose into lunged adults that will live in the water or on the land depending on the species. Tadpoles are a good example. They spend the early stages of their life in the water and later may live on land. To be successful, they must have water to reproduce.

Reptiles are also cold blooded vertebrate animals but have dry skin covered with scales or bony plates, the snakes, turtles, lizards, and alligators. Reptiles have lungs and breath air. Reptiles lay shelled eggs on land except for some species of snakes that bear live young. These creatures do not have a larval stage of development.

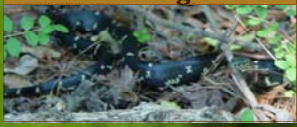
Both amphibians and reptiles depend on wetlands for survival. The plant communities available to these creatures should be diverse. They provide food, shelter and water purification. Also, plant communities help to regulate temperature and humidity in wetland environments, critical components needed for cold blooded animals. Wetlands designed with these creatures in mind provide habitat for all stages of their life. To provide this habitat there are several things that must be considered. The core habitat area near the wetland must be preserved. This is the area that the animals use to forage, reproduce, and migrate into and out of the wetland. In Brick Pond Park the core habitat area for these creatures is protected for the species. The trails are positioned away from core habitat area. The wooded area above West Pond and portions of East Pond are considered the core area for the amphibians and reptiles that inhabit the park. As the park matures, the core area will expand as the vegetation continues to grow. These areas provide corridors for movement through the system. As you will notice during your visit, the trails do not lead into the core areas. In addition to these core areas, microhabitats have been designed including brush piles, hibernacula (areas underground for hibernation), rocks, cover objects, and sand piles. Many areas of the park contain these underground areas that are not obvious to visitors.

While some people may be concerned that some of these creatures are a nuisance, they are critical components of a healthy ecological system. Nature in balance is efficient. For example, the removal of alligators would increase the beaver population, leading to more beaver dams in pipes and more trees being destroyed by their activity. The increase in the beaver population would consequently attract more alligators from the river until equilibrium or ecological balance is re-established. The presence of stable populations of reptiles and amphibians signifies that Brick Pond Park is healthy and balanced.

Yellow-bellied slider



Eastern King snake



Common snapping turtle



Anole



Red-bellied water snake



Eastern Box Turtle



Southern Cricket Frog



Marbled Salamander



Grey tree frog



Baby Yellow-bellied slider



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