



Slippery Salamanders

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A salamander's an amphibian. A reptile it is not.
You can tell it's an amphibian by the moist skin it's got.

A salamander's not a lizard, but like a lizard, sheds its skin.
Their skin secretes a special mucous to keep the moisture in.

Some salamanders have four shorts legs and four tiny feet.
Four front toes and five back toes make its feet complete.

Some salamanders have two front legs that are very small.
Some salamanders are like eels and have no legs at all.

Salamanders have slender bodies, short noses, and long tails,
But because they are amphibians, salamanders have no scales.

They are often brightly colored, and they stay that way all year.
Some salamanders have no pigment so white or pink they will appear.

Most salamanders are fairly small, only about a half foot long.
Their size is an indication to which species they belong.

Salamanders shed their skin and then they eat this slough.
Their skin provides them protein and other important stuff.

There are three types of salamanders, classified by habitat.
One type lives in water and prefers to live like that.

A second type is *semi-aquatic*. It lives on land most of the year.
It only lives in water when mating time is near.

The third type lives only on land, but water is nearby.
Their eggs are laid in water but the rest of their life is fairly dry.

All salamanders are *carnivorous*, which mean that they eat meat.
They eat gnats, fruit flies, and spiders. Earthworms are also a treat.

If a salamander loses a limb, it regenerates or grows a new one back.
That's a salamander characteristic that most other *vertebrates* lack.

Salamanders breathe through gills or lungs. Some breathe through their skin.
Some have gills that you can see; others have their gills within.

There are more salamanders in North America than anywhere around.
In the United States alone, more than 125 kinds are found.

If you should find a salamander, don't pick it up; just let it lie.
Handling a salamander is not advisable. It could cause it to die.

The salamanders' population isn't growing. It's dropping every year.
A fungal disease is a problem that's causing some to disappear.

Climate change and deforestation contribute to their decline, too.
Saving our environment for plants and animals is a job we all can do.