

Critter Quest by the Lake (and at the top of the hill)

1. This quest starts at the top the Aspen Hill, along Eaglehead Drive.
2. Parking can be found along the side of the road at the top. Trail starts on the Aspen side, or south side of the road, facing the woods, by the green TRAIL post. This is shortly after where the grassy median ends.
3. Wildlife is ever present around our lakes. Many of us have seen the deer, bunnies, and squirrels. But what's lurking under that rock? Or that fallen tree? Come explore the forest floor to see what's lurking on the bottom.
4. In order to complete the quest you will need a crayon or pencil. Good hiking shoes or sneakers are ideal, and clothes that can get at least a little dirty are a wonderful idea. Your hands will be getting dirty, so you may wish to bring gloves (get as dirty as you like, gardening gloves could work well). You may want to have hand sanitizer or water for washing your hands afterwards. A camera would be great to capture (in photos) your findings!
5. Bugs, insects, and salamanders love to crawl and inhabit the forest floor. We often overlook their habitat, but they are under almost every rock, fallen log, and bits of debris that cover the ground in the forest. As you travel along the trail, look for places where you can move or gently pry objects to uncover the critters below.
6. As you travel the trails, remember the basics of Leave No Trace. Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints. When you do find critters, be gentle. Salamanders must have moist skin to survive, handling them can hurt and even kill them. After viewing, gently replace the rock and or log you found the critters under **IN THE SAME PLACE**.
7. For each rock or log you uncover, record the number of critters you found. **How many total did you find? How many different kinds?** PLEASE BEWARE. The goal of this quest is to give you a sample of what lives around us. If you are unsure about what something is, **LEAVE IT ALONE**. In your logbook, record the number of critters you found and draw a picture of one of them.

Pictured below is the Eastern Red Backed Salamander, common to our forests.

