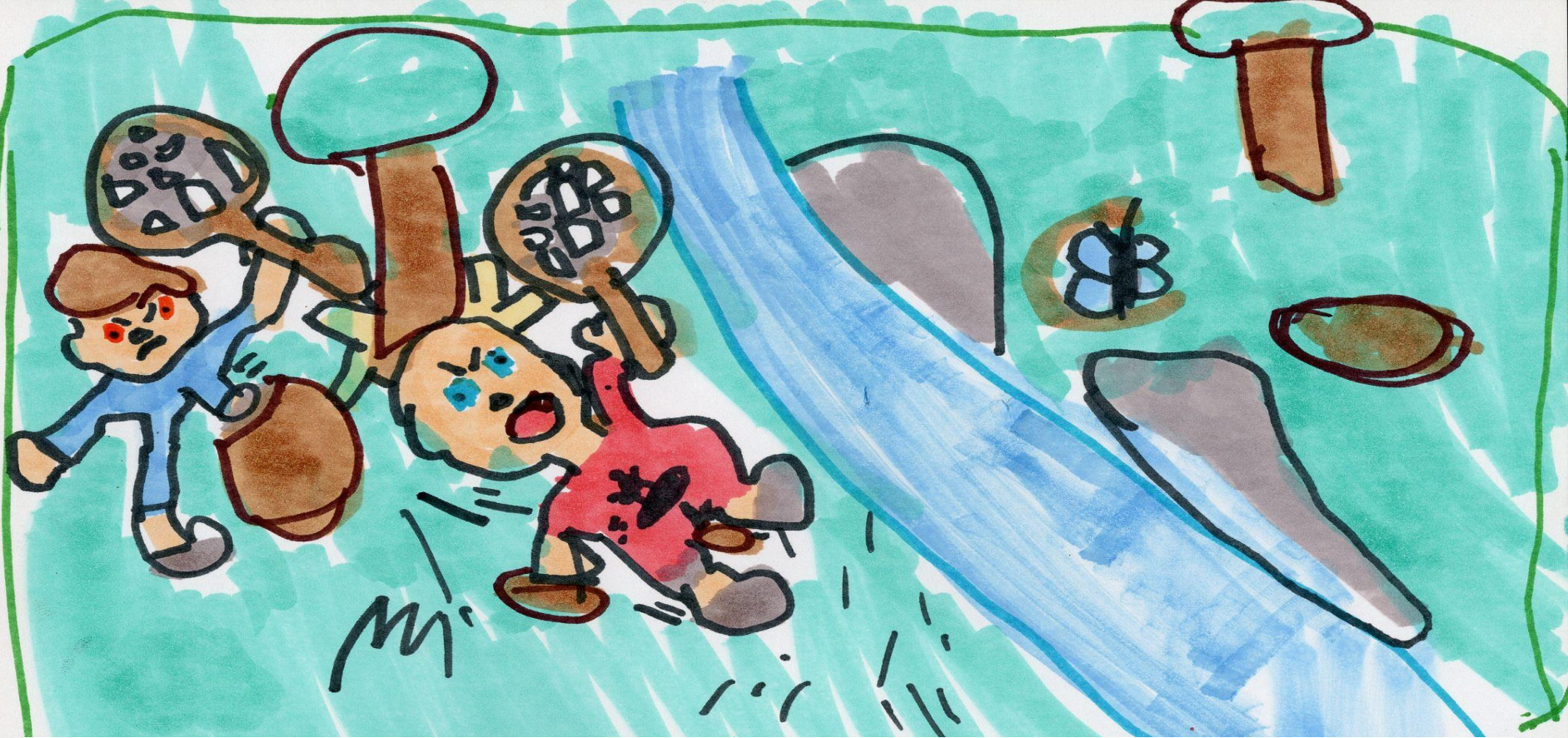


Boys to Salamanders

By Bowen Groves



Not long ago, in West Virginia, twins Potter and Totter were looking for bugs for Show-and-Tell. They spotted a beautiful butterfly that they had to catch!



They chased the butterfly to a river. Not thinking ahead, they tried to jump across... it didn't go well. They fell screaming, because it wasn't just a river, **IT WAS A WATERFALL!**



The boys popped their heads up at the bottom.

“Totter, you’re... different,” said Potter.

“No, YOU’RE different, Potter. THAT’S A TAIL, and what’s up with all the silmy?” replied Totter, confused.

It occurred to the boys that they might not be at Show-and-Tell on Monday.



Totter, never one to dwell, began to imagine the pros of their situation. “Are we lizards? Can I be Godzilla!”

“Hey, snap out of it! We’re amphibians, not lizards! Ms. Perry taught us that weeks ago!” replied Potter, in disbelief.



“Okay, just tell me what we are then,” said Totter.

Potter replied, “We’re salamanders. Salamanders are amphibians. Godzilla is a lizard. Lizards are reptiles.”

“What makes us different?” questioned Totter.



Exasperated, Potter began his explanation, “For starters, we’re slimy and breathe through our skin. Some of us live in the water all the time. We go through metamorphosis... how do you not remember any of this?”

“... What’s metamorphosis, again?” asked Totter.

Red spotted newt life cycle (Metamorphosis)

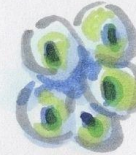
Aquatic Adults

Up to 15 years



200-400 Eggs

3-8 weeks



Aquatic Larvae

3-5 months



Terrestrial Efts

2-7 years



Potter explained how some salamanders drastically transform while they grow up: from jelly-like eggs that become legless larvae, then into landbound juveniles, and, finally, into aquatic adults.

salamanders (YAY!)	Lizards (BOO!)
Smooth skin, covered in mucus (snot, heh...)	Dry, scaly skin
Can breath through skin, gils, and/or lungs	Lungs only
Can regrow limbs, tails, and complex organs	Can only regrow tails
No claws	Claws (barbarians...)
Jelly-like eggs	Hard/Leathery eggs
METAMPORPHOSIS!!!	Just get bigger <i><u>and UGLIER</u></i> (Totter!)

Totter, full of questions he should have asked in school, “How are we different from reptiles?”

eastern
Hell bender ↘



Marbled ↗
Salamander



↗
Northern Red
Salamander

WV
has
34 species
ranging
from 4 inches to
2 feet



↗
Common
mudpuppy



↗
Cave
Salamander



Suddenly, the butterfly from earlier appeared.

“Since we’re salamanders now, can we eat that butterfly?” asked Totter.

“Yes, if it lands – we’re opportunistic predators after all. Some cousins have sticky tongues that can grab prey like a frog, but we’ll lunge out and surprise it!” replied Potter.

The boys began their sneak attack! Totter from the front, and Potter from the back.

1-2-3-SPLASH!



Totter stood up and looked at his drenched clothes, surprised.

“WHEW, was it a dream? Wait... IS THAT BUTTERFLY ON MY TONGUE!?! Nah... still pretty tasty for some reason...”

Selected Bibliography

Pauley, Thomas K., et al. *Amphibians and Reptiles of West Virginia*. Quarrier Press, 2025.

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