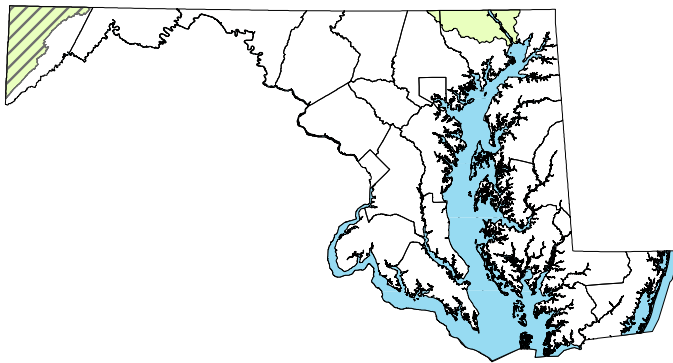


# Eastern Hellbender

*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*

Hellbenders can range in size from 11 to 20 inches. The largest one ever recorded was 29 inches. Hellbenders do have working lungs however; most of their breathing is done by absorbing oxygen through their skin. That is why they are so wrinkly (to increase surface area). There is no easy way to tell the difference between a male and a female Hellbender. They are the third largest species of salamander in the world.

## Description



## Range/Habitat

Hellbenders live in large, fast-flowing, rocky streams, more specifically under very large rocks. There are two types of Hellbender in the U.S. The Eastern Hellbender ranges from lower New York State, including Maryland, to northeastern Mississippi. The Ozark is only found in southeastern Missouri and northeastern Arkansas. In Maryland Hellbenders were once found in the Susquehanna and its tributaries, the Youghiogheny, and Casselman rivers. Hellbender populations in Maryland are currently very low.

No one really knows how the name "Hellbender" originated. Some think it may be from the Hellbenders very odd appearance. Some other names for Hellbenders include snot otter, devil dog, and Allegheny alligator. Hellbenders are mostly nocturnal. Rarely, they can be seen moving during the day if it is cloudy or during the breeding season. The diet of a Hellbender consists mostly of crayfish and small fish. They have also been known to eat worms, insects and smaller Hellbenders. Hellbenders are NOT poisonous, so there is no need to fear them.

## General Information

Hellbenders are classified as endangered in Maryland. Populations in Maryland and throughout the U.S. are declining. Threats to Hellbenders include: acidic drainage from coal mines, increased dam building, reduced water quality through pollution and sediments, persecution by fisherman, and a fungus call Chytrid.

## Threats/ Conservation Status