

California Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*)

Status - Federal: Threatened; State: None



Photo: John Brode (CDFW)

Adult California tiger salamanders (CTS) have stocky bodies, round blunt snouts, broad heads and small protuberant eyes. Adults are about 8 inches (200 mm) in length, jet black with white or yellow spots or bars. Larvae vary from 2 to 3 inches (41 to 78 mm) at metamorphosis. Larvae are usually a dull-yellowish grey, with broad, flat heads and large feathery gills.

Habitat: CTS occur in grassland and oak savannah, with seasonal or fishless natural ponds, vernal pools, intermittent streams, or stock ponds for breeding and larval development. Adults spend most of the year below ground in rodent burrows or other natural crevices.

California Tiger Salamander



Dispersal: Adult CTS become active above ground on rainy nights during late fall through early spring, when they migrate to breeding habitat. Individuals can be observed crawling through the grass, sitting at or in the mouth of rodent burrows, or entering water bodies where breeding occurs. They are known to move through grasslands, agricultural areas, and cross roads during nocturnal migrations.

Reproduction: Most breeding occurs from December through March. Adult females lay between 400-1,300 eggs, loosely attached to vegetation near the edge of breeding ponds. Eggs hatch in 10-14 days and larvae metamorphose in late spring or early summer, 60 to

94 days after the eggs are laid. Afterwards, juveniles disperse into upland habitat. Salamanders require 2 to 6 years to reach sexual maturity and can live in excess of 10 years.

Food: It is assumed adults feed on insects, worms, and other invertebrates living in and around rodent burrows. After hatching, larvae feed on algae and small invertebrates. After about 6 weeks, larvae begin to feed on larger prey such as small Pacific tree frog and California red-legged frog tadpoles, larger aquatic invertebrates and even smaller salamander larvae.

Distribution: CTS are located in the central coast range and Central Valley of California, from southern Solano County to eastern Kern County, and in the Sierra Nevada foothills, from southern Sacramento County to northern Tulare County. The species occurs to an elevation of 3,000 feet in the central coast range, but it is considered uncommon at elevations over 1,500 feet.



California Department of Pesticide Regulation
Endangered Species Project
www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/endspec/index.htm

