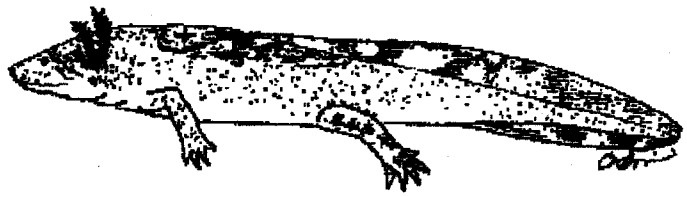
Cope's Giant Salamander

Dicamptodon copei
Family Dicamptodontidae

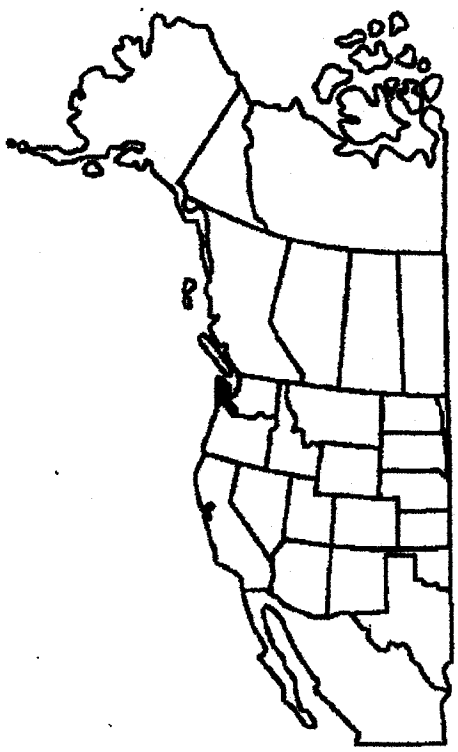


Global Rank: G3
State Rank: S2 (OR); S3 (WA)

Distribution: Ranges from the Olympic Peninsula in Washington south through the southern Cascades and Willapa Hills to streams draining into the Columbia River, and in extreme northwestern Oregon. Extends from near sea level to around 4,500 ft. (1,370 m.) in elevation.

Description: The larval form reaches to 8 in. (20 cm.) in total length. The larvae rarely transform into the adult stage. It resembles the larvae of the Pacific giant salamander, but is slimmer and does not reach such a large size. The head is smaller and narrower, the tail fins are lower and shorter, and the dorsal fin usually does not reach to the area above the vent. Fins have less dark mottling, the eyestripe is faint or missing, and the belly is darker. A transformed individual from Spirit Lake, Washington, was sooty with no pattern above and dark gray below.

Reproduction: Little is known and life history is inferred from the Pacific giant salamander. It



Current range of the Cope's giant salamander

probably breeds as neotenic larvae from spring to fall, laying a clutch of 20-115 eggs in nest chambers under stones. Females guard the eggs from predators. It may take as long as nine months until eggs are hatched.

Food: This salamander feeds on a wide variety of aquatic organisms, including insect larvae, fish eggs, tadpoles, and young salmonids and sculpins.

Habits: Cope's giant salamanders are found in moist coniferous forest areas in clear, cold streams where the temperature is usually between 8° and 14°C., and in mountain lakes and ponds with gravel bottoms and boulders. They may be found on wet rocks and vegetation on rainy nights, but usually occur under rocks, slabs of bark, or other cover in streams.

Management Implications: The species was first described in 1970. Terrestrial adults are very rare with only three metamorphosed adults being known through 1997. Its requirements for clear, cold water may make it sensitive to logging activities. The type locality was near Mount St. Helens, and that population may have been destroyed by eruptions of the mountain.

Important References: Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. The Peterson Field Guide Series, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY; Csuti, B., A.J. Kimerling, T.A. O'Neil, M.M. Shaughnessy, E.P. Gaines, and M.M.P. Huso. 1997. Atlas of Oregon wildlife. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, OR.