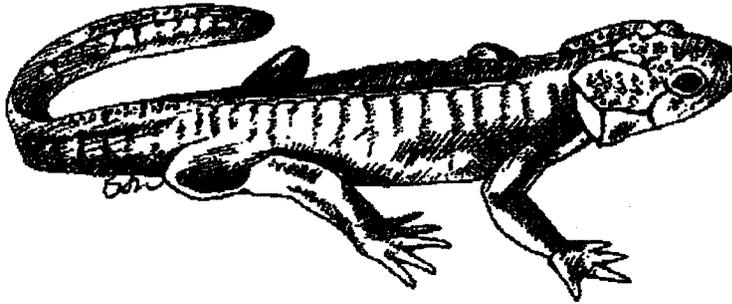


Northwestern Salamander

Ambystoma gracile
Family Ambystomatidae



Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S2 (AK); S4 (CA); S5 (OR, WA)

Distribution: Found along the humid coast from extreme southeastern Alaska, chiefly west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains, to the mouth of Gualala River, California. Extends from near sea level to around 10,200 ft. (3,110 m.) in elevation.

Description: Adults reach around 9 in. (23 cm.) in total length. Coloration is brown, gray, or black above with a broad head and relatively small eyes. They have parotoid glands and a glandular thickening along the upper border of the tail. The glandular areas are pitted with openings of poison glands and the skin there is rougher than elsewhere. No tubercles are on the underside of feet. The back may be flecked with cream or yellow in northern part of the range.

Reproduction: Migration between breeding and non-breeding habitats usually done during rainy nights. Spawns in ponds, lakes, and streams from January to August. Breeding is



*Current range of the
northwestern salamander*

later in areas in the north and at higher elevations. Eggs are laid in clusters in quiet water and attached to vegetation one to three feet below the surface. Average clutch size is 80 eggs (range 30 to 270). Eggs usually hatch in May to July or after about 30 to 60 days. In colder areas, larvae may overwinter and some may be neotenic.

Food: Adults feed primarily on insects, earthworms, molluscs, and other terrestrial invertebrates. Larvae eat zooplankton and other aquatic invertebrates.

Habits: Resides in meadows, woodlands, and coniferous or deciduous forests. It spends most of its life underground in rodent burrows and under rocks and logs near water. Often found under driftwood on streambanks after storms when water is receding. The northwestern salamander is active at night and searches for food on the forest floor under debris.

Management Implications: It is preyed upon by introduced trout and may be sensitive to pesticides and herbicides that may enter breeding waters. When molested, adults close their eyes, assume a butting pose, elevate the tail, and secrete a sticky white poison from glands on the head, back, and tail. This secretion may cause skin irritation in some people.

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.