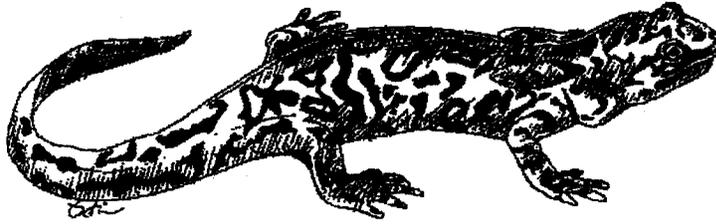


Pacific Giant Salamander

Dicamptodon tenebrosus
Family Dicamptodontidae



Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S4 (OR); S5 (WA); S? (CA)

Distribution: Found in coast ranges and Cascade Mountains from southern British Columbia to San Francisco Bay. Inland in northern California to headwaters of Sacramento River. Ranges from near sea level to around 7,000 ft. (2,160 m.) in elevation.

Description: Adults reach nearly 12 in. (30 cm.) in total length. This is a large, formidable-looking salamander with a massive head and often marbled coloration. The skin is smooth and costal grooves inconspicuous. There are only two joints in fourth toe of hind foot. There are no foot tubercles. Dark brown coloration to almost black above, with a network of irregular spots or marbling of tan, copper, gray, or purplish. Ground color darkens in northern populations.

Reproduction: While the reproductive biology of this species is poorly known, it probably breeds in the spring. Eggs are usually laid in deep-water nest chambers, where the female remains until the eggs hatch. In coastal populations, eggs take about 200 days to hatch. The



*Current range of the
Pacific giant salamander*

clutch size is about 100 to 200 eggs. The larval period lasts two years in smaller streams, but in larger streams and lakes the salamanders can be neotenic.

Food: This salamander is an opportunistic carnivore. Adults eat land snails, slugs, insects, small mammals, other amphibians, lizards, and even birds. Aquatic larvae feed on insect larvae, tadpoles, other salamanders, and small fish.

Habits: It is found in humid mixed conifer and deciduous forests and riparian zones. Downed logs are required for shelter and foraging. Larvae occupy cold, clear water of streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Adults search for prey on the forest floor under ground debris, and have been known to climb trees in search of food.

Management Implications: The Pacific giant salamander was recently reclassified from *D. ensatus* to *D. tenebrosus*. It is common in suitable habitat. Activities causing siltation of streams and removal of riparian vegetation (which helps maintain cool water temperatures) are detrimental.

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.