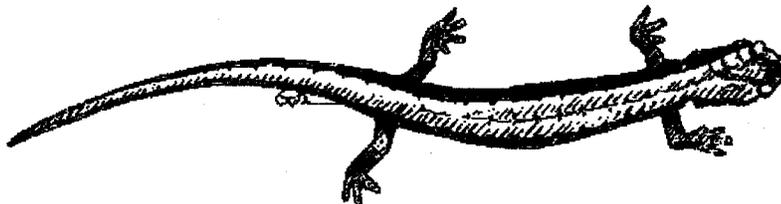


Western Redback Salamander

Plethodon vehiculum
Family Plethodontidae



Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S5 (OR, WA)

Distribution: Ranges from Vancouver Island and coastal southern British Columbia south in the Coastal and Cascade Mountains to Curry County in southern Oregon. From near sea level to around 4,100 ft. (1,250 m.) in elevation.

Description: Adults reach to 2 1/2 in. (6.2 cm.) in snout-vent length, and about 4 in. (10 cm.) in total length. Dorsal stripe is usually well defined in tan, reddish brown, orange, yellow, or dusky edged with black. The stripe has even edges, extending to the tip of the tail. Sides of body are dusky, sprinkled with white. Bottoms are blue-gray with varying amounts of yellowish or orange flecking. There usually are 16 costal grooves (range 14 to 18), and 2 1/2 to 5 1/2 costal folds between toes of adpressed limbs.

Reproduction: Breeds from November to March, laying a clutch of 10 (range 6-19) eggs, which the female broods until they hatch in the fall. Females probably breed every other year.



*Current range of the
western redback salamander*

Food: Feeds on terrestrial invertebrates such as mites, springtails, beetles, sowbugs, ants, and spiders.

Habits: A forest dweller, this salamander occurs under logs, rocks, and debris throughout humid coniferous and deciduous forests. It is found in moist microhabitats, but is not closely associated with running water. Found under rocks, logs, bark, and boards in damp locations. The species is scarce to absent above the snowline. It is inactive in both cold and hot weather. Temperatures must be above freezing for courtship to occur. Juveniles remain in the nest until fall rains begin.

Management Implications: The most widespread and abundant woodland salamander in the Pacific Northwest.

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.