

Outdoor Recreation *is* Outdoor Education

Salamanders of New Mexico

Just three species of salamander are found in New Mexico: Tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), Jemez Mountain salamander (*Plethodon neomexicanus*) and Sacramento Mountain salamander (*Aneides hardii*). Though they may resemble lizards, they are in fact amphibians.

Tiger salamanders are fossorial, spending much of their lives underground in burrows. They can be found statewide where suitable habitat exists and belong to the family Ambystomatidae (or “mole salamanders”). They lay eggs in water that hatch into an aquatic lifestage, with external gills, often called “waterdogs” and used as fishing bait. If food and water are plentiful, tiger salamanders may remain in this grayish-pink aquatic lifestage for their entire lives, which is called neoteny (the retention of juvenile characteristics in an adult animal). If needed, they can undergo the change to their terrestrial form, losing their external gills and becoming their contrasting yellow and black adult coloration.

Both aquatic and terrestrial tiger salamanders will eat just about whatever they can fit in their mouths.

Jemez Mountain and Sacramento Mountain salamanders are endemic species (found in and around the areas for which they are named) of the Plethodontidae family (or “lungless salamanders”). As their family name suggests, they lack lungs and instead breathe through mucous membranes in their mouths and throats and through their skin. Both are considered endangered in the state.

Sacramento Mountain salamanders are found in the Capitan, White and namesake mountains.

Jemez Mountain salamanders are found in portions of their namesake mountain range across three counties.

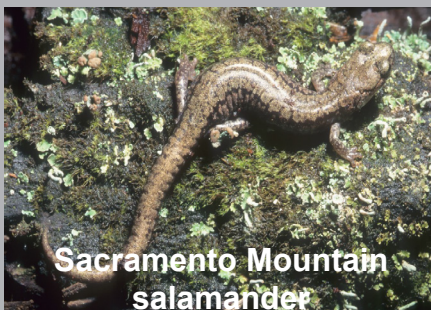
Both of our mountain salamanders seldom venture from their moist refuges under rotting logs or rocks, where they lay their eggs and eat ants, insect larvae, termites, earthworms and small invertebrates you would expect to find living next to them.



Tiger salamander



Jemez Mountain salamander



Sacramento Mountain salamander



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

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