



## Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Heritage Program

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### *Ambystoma tigrinum* Tiger Salamander

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Photo by J. Harding

**Identification:** A dark salamander irregularly patterned with yellow spots along back; sometimes yellow patches or bars along sides. The belly is mottled gray and yellow.

**Measurements:** Typically 7-8 inches in length, occasionally reaches 13 inches.

**Taxonomic comments:** Populations in Louisiana may be an intermediate subspecies or a hybrid of the barred salamander *Ambystoma tigrinum mavortium* and eastern tiger salamander *Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum*.

**Status:** Global rank is **G5** and state rank is **S1**.

**Habitat:** Sandy areas near water in longleaf pine savannas and flatwoods. Reside underground, sometimes in abandoned rodent burrows or crawfish holes; emerges and breeds in still water that has no fish.

**Range:** Eastern Tiger Salamanders range from Long island along the coast through the Gulf of Mexico, east through Texas, north to the western Ohio Valley as well as the southern Great Lakes basin, west to the Minnesota and onto the eastern plains states, and it is absent from the Appalachian highlands and lower Mississippi delta.

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**Food habits:** Adults: worms, insects, snails, frogs, snakes, tadpoles, nestling mice. Larvae: all aquatic prey; perhaps cannibalistic.

**Life expectancy:** Can live up to 25 years.

**Reproduction:** Reach sexual maturity in 2-7 years. Females lay 10-100 eggs in gelatinous enclosed clusters from September to December. Tadpoles transform into salamanders from March to late April.

**Reason for decline:** 1) Habitat modification: Drainage of wetlands modifies and reduces breeding habitats. Terrestrial habitats that are also modified allowing adults little protection from the sun and predators.

2) Agricultural runoff: Pesticides and fertilizers leach into breeding habitats, destroying larval food populations, retarding larval response to predators, reducing immune response in larvae, and reducing rates of metamorphosis.

3) Tadpoles of this species transform late in spring and are therefore susceptible to drought.

- 4) Introduction of predatory fish into permanent pools and expansion of bullfrog populations threaten annual reproduction.
- 5) Recreational activities, especially off-road vehicles further impact breeding sites and year round habitat. Increased construction of roads has also bisected the habitat, jeopardizing migrating adults.

**Interesting facts:** The tiger salamander is the largest land dwelling salamander in the world.

**Known distribution in Louisiana:**



**Dates of documented observations are:** 1925, 1964, 1969, 1995, and 1997

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