



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Heritage Program

Plethodon websteri Webster's Salamander



Identification: A brown salamander with a light red/orange stripe running down its back. Sides are gray or dark brown and the belly is mottled with orange or red patches.

Measurements: Adult: total length 2.75-3 inches. Hatchlings: 13 mm from head to the base of the tail.

Taxonomic comments: Although identical in appearance to the zigzag salamander, *Plethodon dorsalis dorsalis*, does not share geographic range and can be separated by molecular analysis.

Status: Global rank is **G3** and state rank is **S1**.

Habitat: Moist hardwood forest bordering rocky streams where they hide beneath rocks, logs, and leaves.

Range: Known from east central Alabama and west central Georgia. Several disjunct populations occur throughout Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

Food habits: small arthropods

Reproduction: Webster's salamanders reach sexual maturity at around 2 years. Mating begins in January. Pregnant females lay between 3-8 eggs in June and July; eggs hatch between August and September, and hatchlings emerge in October and November.

Reason for decline: Habitat destruction including the conversion of hardwood forest to pine plantations.

Interesting facts: 1) This salamander is rare in Louisiana, the population covers less than 10 acres. 2) Webster's Salamander is a species of woodland salamander, the most abundant group of invertebrates in forest habitats. These species are important indicators of habitat quality and degradation because of their concentrated populations, dependence on both terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and role as insect predators. Declines in salamander populations are early indications of ecosystem damage that may still be reversed.

Known distribution in Louisiana:



Dates of documented observations are: 1999

References

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