



Western Tiger Salamander Fact Sheet

House Bill 12-1147 Proposes to Adopt the Western Tiger Salamander as Colorado's State Amphibian

Why is the Western Tiger Salamander?

- The Western Tiger Salamander is the only native and documented amphibian to be found in all 64 Colorado counties.
- They were first reported in Colorado in 1875 by Henry C. Yarrow MD, an American naturalist and surgeon.
- They have lived in modern day Colorado since prehistoric times. Fossilized remains were found in the 2010 Snowmass Village, Ice Age era excavation by Denver's Museum of Nature and Science.
- They occupy a variety of habitats found in between Colorado's 12,000 feet alpine tundra and the loose soils of our eastern prairie plains.
- They are the largest terrestrial salamander in the world.

Species, Distribution and Behavior

- **Species:** Three, highly genetically related Western Tiger salamander subspecies call Colorado home: *Ambystoma mavortium mavortium*, also commonly called the Barred Tiger salamander live throughout eastern Colorado; *Ambystoma mavortium melanostictum*, commonly called the Blotched Tiger salamander live in north central and northwestern Colorado; and *Ambystoma mavortium nebulosum*, commonly called the Arizona Tiger salamander live through central and western Colorado.
- **Natural shelters:** include underground burrows, under damp leaf litter piles, sand dunes or logs.
- **Man-made shelters:** include window wells, landscaped areas, sprinkler control boxes, drainage pipes and under porches.
- **Life cycle:** spring rains wake adults from their burrows after winter hibernation. They crawl to bodies of water including vernal pools, ponds, farm ditches and watering troughs, wetlands, streams and lakes. Courtship and mating follows. Females lay shell-less egg clusters on submerged vegetation and rocks. They hatch and metamorphose into free swimming, gilled aquatic larvae, then into lung-breathing terrestrial amphibians. Metamorphosis to land dwelling, terrestrial salamanders can take up 5 months.
- **Feeding habits:** Western Tiger Salamanders are nocturnal amphibian and hunts at night. They eat earthworms, insects, spiders, snails, small mice and other amphibians, including their own species.
- **Natural predators:** frogs, fish, snakes, raccoons, coyotes, pelicans, gulls, herons and egrets.
- **Life Expectancy:** Estimated lifespan in the wild: up to 15-20 years.

References and Sources: