

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

DESERT SLENDER SALAMANDER
Family: PLETHODONTIDAE
A013a

Batrachoseps major aridus
Order: CAUDATA

Class: AMPHIBIA

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Batrachoseps major aridus was formerly recognized as a full species, *B. aridus*. The species was then reduced to a subspecies of *B. major* using DNA analysis (Wake and Jockusch 2000). The salamander is found only in Hidden Palm Canyon, a tributary of Deep Canyon, and nearby Guadalupe Canyon, Riverside Co., at an elevation of 750 m (2500 ft) (Stebbins 2003). The entire population of this species may be less than 1,000 individuals. Habitats occupied include barren, palm oasis, desert wash, and desert scrub. The 57 ha (141 ac) Hidden Palm Ecological Reserve is the only known habitat of this salamander (California Department of Fish and Game 1980).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: No information, but probably takes a variety of small arthropods, annelids, and molluscs.

Cover: *B. m. aridus* occurs under limestone sheets, rocks, and talus, usually at the base of shaded, water-soaked, north-and west-facing cliff-like walls (Brame 1970).

Reproduction: Egg-laying occurs in fall and winter. Presumably eggs are laid deep in moist limestone crevices (Nafis 2018).

Water: Always associated with moist seepages.

Pattern: Prefers moist areas with rocky cover.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: *B. major aridus* has been found active year around (Nafis 2018). During wetter, cooler months (late winter, early spring) individuals may be found primarily under rocks, but appear to retreat to moist areas underneath limestone slabs by late summer (Brame 1970).

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: Unknown, but probably small (less than one acre).

Territory: Unknown.

Reproduction: Little information. Related forms lay eggs in clusters of from 4 to 21 (Stebbins 1954).

Niche: No data.

Comments: The limestone sheets utilized by *B. major aridus* may be critical as cover during summer. Destruction of these sheets by collectors, or other human activities, could cause the extinction of the entire species.

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