

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

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BLACKBELLY SLENDER SALAMANDER                      *Batrachoseps nigriventris*  
Family: PLETHODONTIDAE                      Order: CAUDATA                      Class: AMPHIBIA  
A015

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Locally common yearlong resident found primarily near drainages associated with open oak, mixed conifer forests, and mixed chaparral of the South Coast and Transverse Ranges, from Monterey Co. south to San Diego Co. and on Santa Barbara Island.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeding apparently occurs both above and below ground (Hendrickson 1954). Stebbins (1951) reported that a similar species, the California slender salamander, fed on earthworms, small slugs, a variety of terrestrial arthropods including sowbugs and millipedes, and insects including collembolans, aphids, caterpillars, small beetles, beetle larvae and ants. Black-bellied slender salamanders probably consume similar prey.

**Cover:** *B. nigriventris* usually does not excavate burrows. It relies on passages made by other animals or produced by root decay or soil shrinkage (Yanev 1978). Usually found under boards, rotting logs, rocks or surface litter (Stebbins 1954).

**Reproduction:** Most reproductive activities probably occur underground, or under cover. Eggs have been found in communal sites beneath rocks, boards, and in pockets of soil near the surface. Most eggs probably are deposited underground (Stebbins 1954, Yanev 1978).

**Water:** This salamander limits surface activity to rainy winter months (Yanev 1978).

**Pattern:** Suitable habitat for this salamander consists of relatively small, semi-mesic areas (e.g., swales, drainages, etc.), with an overstory of trees or shrubs and abundant rocks, litter, or woody debris.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** In dry weather, these salamanders retreat underground. After winter and spring rains, when ground is damp, and temperatures are favorable, they emerge and become active on the surface (Stebbins 1954). In coastal habitats, conditions are favorable for surface activity 8 to 9 months of the year (Yanev 1978). Surface activity is limited by extremes in temperature and unfavorable moisture conditions.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** This salamander is highly sedentary; hatchlings presumably disperse, but no data were found (Yanev 1978).

**Home Range:** Black-bellied slender salamanders probably have a decided tendency towards occupying a home range. Hendrickson (1954) found that adults of *B. attenuatus* moved within a mean cruising range of 1.5 m (5 ft) from their home cover over 2 years, and

that 59% of the individuals were found repeatedly under the same cover.

Territory: No data.

Reproduction: Eggs have been found from November 5 to March 14. The number of eggs per clutch ranges from 4 to 21, with an average of 12; but larger clutches (over 74) have been recorded, probably the result of several females laying in the same nest. Hatchlings emerge during winter and early spring. It is not known whether adults tend their young (Stebbins 1985).

Niche: *B. nigriventris* is incapable of making its own burrows, except in loose soil and leaf litter (Stebbins 1954). Competition for cover sites may exist between individuals of the same species and other species with similar habitat requirements (Yanev 1978). Potential predators include spotted and striped skunks, raccoons, ringtails, gray foxes, ringneck snakes, and various skinks, moles, and shrews.

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