

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

TEHACHAPI SLENDER SALAMANDER

Batrachoseps stebbinsi

Family: PLETHODONTIDAE

Order: CAUDATA

Class: AMPHIBIA

A018

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

This species is uncommon in suitable habitat in a small number of isolated localities in the Piute and Tehachapi Mts. of Kern Co., and perhaps in Los Angeles Co. Elevation 760 to 1500 m (2500 to 5000 ft). Preferred habitats include valley foothill hardwood-conifer and valley-foothill riparian.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages primarily under surface objects such as pieces of bark or flat talus rocks in moist areas or in leaf litter, and may enter termite tunnels and earthworm burrows. Little information on food habits, but related species take small arthropods such as spiders and mites, insects (especially collembolans, coleopterans, and hymenopterans), earthworms, and snails (Cunningham 1960, Adams 1968).

Cover: During the moist periods of fall, winter, and spring precipitation, individuals seek cover under surface objects, especially rock talus (Brame and Murray 1968). This species retreats to moist underground niches or seepage areas during drier periods.

Reproduction: Little information on specific habitat requirements for breeding or egg laying. Eggs of similar species are laid underground or on moist substrates underneath or within surface objects, especially pieces of bark (Stebbins 1972).

Water: No information on water requirements, but surface activity is strongly correlated with periods of fall, winter and spring precipitation.

Pattern: This species appears to prefer north-facing talus slopes in valley-foothill hardwood-conifer and valley-foothill riparian habitats.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Nocturnal surface activity during moist periods (November to May). Retreats underground or to moist seepages during drier periods.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Retreats to subterranean refugia during dry periods.

Home Range: No information; probably small. Area of surface activity probably covers, or is proximal to, the area of underground activity.

Territory: Unknown. Individuals have not been observed to actively defend resources, but females of related species are commonly found in the immediate vicinity of egg clusters.

Reproduction: Probably lays eggs during the rainy periods of winter and early spring. Related forms lay eggs in clusters of 4 to 21 (Stebbins 1954 and references therein).

Niche: A semifossorial species able to enter termite tunnels, earthworm burrows and other small openings not available to other more robust salamanders. May compete for food resources with juvenile salamanders of other species where their ranges overlap. Primary predators are probably small snakes such as the ringneck snake. Adults and juveniles may also be taken by beetle larvae and other predatory arthropods, diurnal birds (especially those that search through leaf litter) and small mammals.

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