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common name	California Tiger Salamander
scientific names	<i>Ambystoma tigrinum californiense</i>
class	Amphibia
order	Caudata
family	Ambystomatidae
habitat	ponds, streams, and large, cloudy vernal pools (over 250 square feet) without fish
size	18 to 38 cm

description The most remarkable feature of the California Tiger Salamander is its striking coloration. Adults are black with yellow or cream spots. The body is thick, with a rounded nose and a pudgy tail. Larvae are pale and have no spots. The larvae also have large fins on the back and feathery gills.

fun facts Adult California Tiger Salamanders can live as long as 30 or maybe even 40 years! Both Tiger Salamanders and Western Spadefoots reproduce in large, deep vernal pools. However, in pools with California Tiger Salamanders you will not find many Western Spadefoots. The few Spadefoots that live there are very large. Why do you think this is true?

life cycle California Tiger Salamanders spend the summer underground in [rodent](#) burrows. After the first few heavy rains in November, they come out of their burrows and migrate to breeding pools, such as large vernal pools and stock ponds (cattle watering holes). The breeding season lasts from December through February. During this time females lay small clusters of eggs on twigs, grass stems, and plants. A jelly-like substance coats the eggs. This protects the eggs against temperature extremes and destruction. Yellowish gray [larvae](#) hatch from the eggs 2 to 4 weeks later.

ecology Small larvae feed on microscopic organisms. Larger larvae also feed on tiny Western Spadefoot tadpoles, Rotifers, [crustaceans](#) and [aquatic insect larvae](#). Adult California Tiger Salamanders use a sit-and-wait strategy to prey on earthworms, snails, insects, fish, Western Spadefoots, and small [mammals](#). In

the few habitats where they remain, California Tiger Salamanders are eaten by Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, fish and introduced (non-native) Bullfrogs.

conservation The California Tiger Salamander is threatened by habitat loss. Most of the loss is due to urban development, farming, and predation by introduced Bullfrogs and fish in breeding ponds. They are also killed by cars on roads that cross their migratory routes.

investigate You will not see any California Tiger Salamanders at the Mather Field vernal pools. Why do think they do not live there?

You can find California Tiger Salamanders at Olcott Lake, a huge vernal pool at Jepson Prairie near Dixon, California. This is less than one hour from Sacramento. During March and April, you can tour Olcott Lake and other vernal pools with the Jepson Prairie Docents and see the salamanders.

