tiger salamander

Ambystoma tigrinum

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Amphibia
Order:	Caudata
Family:	Ambystomatidae

Features

The tiger salamander is Iowa's largest and most abundant salamander. Adults are seven to 8 1/2 inches long. Its body is blue-black or brown-black with random, small, yellow blotches. The olive-yellow belly has dark stripes.

Natural History

The tiger salamander lives in woodlands, prairie marshes, urban areas, and farm fields. It will utilize almost any fish-free body of non-flowing water. Adults eat earthworms, crickets, grasshoppers, other insects, small mice, and other amphibians, including their own larvae. It spends most of its time under ground. It is most active at night. Breeding occurs in the spring, although migration to breeding ponds may occur in the fall. Clusters of 25 to 100 eggs are attached to objects on the bottom of a pond. A female may deposit up to 1,000 eggs in a breeding season. Incubation depends on the temperature, but averages three weeks. Larvae transform to the adult land-based form from July through September. Some larvae are seined for fish bait in Iowa and often are (incorrectly) called "mudpuppies" by the people who use or sell them.

Habitats

Bottomland forests; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes; temporary water supplies, wet prairies and fens; interior rivers and streams, Mississippi River; Missouri River

Iowa Status

common, native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.