



## Eastern Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)

*Am-bisto-mah ti-grin-um*



**Description:** 6 to 13 inches. Eastern tiger salamanders are a large, stocky and heavily built mole salamander with a ground color of black, brown, or olive. They have various amounts of lighter,

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scattered, irregular spots, blotches, flecks, or cross bars over the body that range in color from yellowish, to tan, or light to dark brown. Newly metamorphosed individuals, and some adults, may have very few to no markings evident. Costal grooves are present, and the head is fairly large and broad. The irregular, scattered blotches and flecks distinguish tiger salamanders from the spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) with which it is often confused with.

**Taxonomy and Classification:**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Caudata/Urodela

**Suborder:** Salamandroidea

**Family:** Ambystomatidae

**Genus:** *Ambystoma*

**Species:** *Ambystoma tigrinum*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

**Similar/Confusing Species:** Spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*) have fewer, more linear rows of round, yellowish spots, and a pair of orangish spots at the base of the head and neck. For tadpole/larvae identification, see the following link below:

<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/pdf/level1/wepp/TadpoleLarvalSalamanderKeys.pdf>

**Etymology:** Ambystoma-Amblys (blunt) stoma (mouth). Also Anabystoma (cram into the mouth). tigrinum-tigris and tigrinus (of tigers).

**Subspecies:** None.

**Range & Habitat:** Range includes that of south central, much of eastern, central, and northwestern Wisconsin. Eastern tiger salamanders may occur in a wide variety of habitats including marshes, prairies, oak savannahs, forests and woodlots, agricultural, and residential areas.

**Habits & Natural History:** Most abundant in the southern two thirds of Wisconsin, excluding southwestern portions apparently, the eastern tiger salamander is a widely adaptable species due to their heavily fossorial nature. The largest terrestrial salamander in Wisconsin, tiger salamanders may occur nearly anywhere where suitable temporary breeding habitat exists, including even farm and ornamental ponds. They are most often seen moving over land and across roads during rainy weather in spring and late summer or fall. Tiger salamanders can be voracious predators of insects and other invertebrates, and even smaller amphibians depending on environmental conditions. Although most tiger salamanders become terrestrial as adults, some populations in Wisconsin are known to exhibit neotony, a trait where adults retain the aquatic lifestyles and traits of their larval forms.

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**Phenology:** Eastern tiger salamanders begin emerging from overwintering during the first warm rains of late March, April, or early May and remain active throughout the year through September or October (or even later if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit) although they are very fossorial during non-migratory periods.

**Conservation Status:** WI Common with no special protections, but regulated by the WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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