



Red-listed species

are those that have been legally designated, or are being considered for legal designation, as Endangered or Threatened.

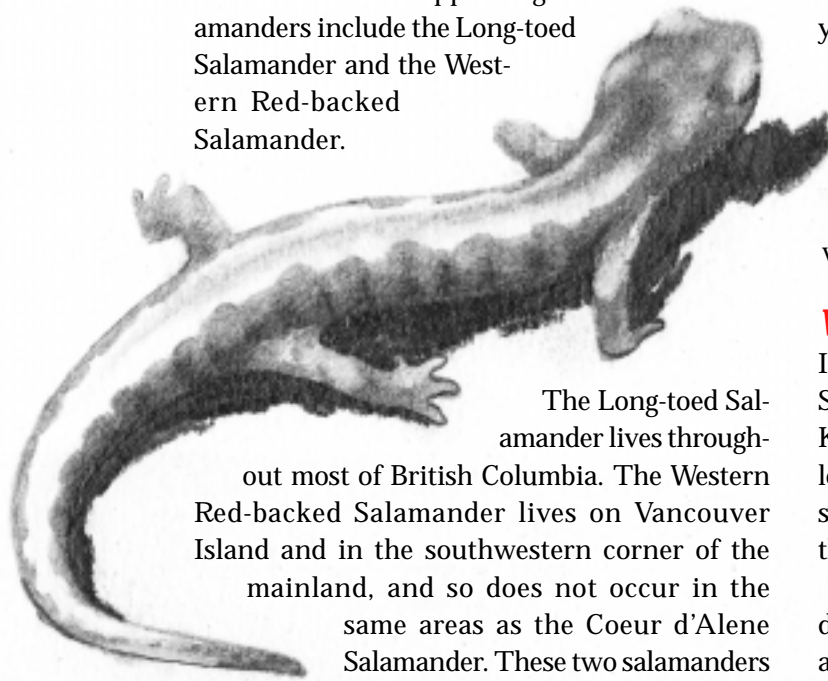
Coeur d'Alene Salamander

Plethodon idahoensis

At a Glance

The Coeur d'Alene Salamander has a long, slim body with bulbous eyes that project above its head like those of a frog. Coeur d'Alene Salamanders grow to a length of 10 to 12 centimetres. Their legs are quite long and they have short, slightly webbed toes. Their bodies are black except for a distinctive yellow chin patch and a wide stripe with scalloped edges running down the back. This stripe can be yellow, orange, green or red.

Other similar-appearing salamanders include the Long-toed Salamander and the Western Red-backed Salamander.



The Long-toed Salamander lives throughout most of British Columbia. The Western Red-backed Salamander lives on Vancouver Island and in the southwestern corner of the mainland, and so does not occur in the same areas as the Coeur d'Alene Salamander. These two salamanders lack the yellow chin patch.

Home Sweet Home

The Coeur d'Alene Salamander likes very wet areas, with deeply fractured rock, close to running water. Rocky seepage areas and river banks splashed by spray from waterfalls are favourite locations. Hiding places, such as flat stones, cracked rocks or fallen logs, are also essential.

These areas must be heavily shaded by trees and shrubs, so they remain cool and damp.

This is the Life

Coeur d'Alene Salamanders grow slowly and take several years to reach maturity. The female lays four to twelve eggs in April or May, but only once every two or three years. Each egg is up to five millimetres in diameter. She sticks the egg cluster onto a piece of wood, under a rock, or in an underground crevice, and guards it until the young hatch at the end of summer.

What's on the Menu?

Insects form most of this salamander's diet. Flies and their larvae seem to be the main items. Feeding takes place at night, at the water's edge and in other damp places.

Where and When

In British Columbia, the Coeur d'Alene Salamander has been found on the east side of Kootenay Lake in the Creston Valley and in one location near the Moyie River. Elsewhere, this species is found in widely scattered sites around the Idaho panhandle and in northern Montana.

Salamanders do not travel far, so the Coeur d'Alene Salamander lives in its chosen locations all year round. Since they only come out from their hiding places at night, they are not often seen. They hibernate during the winter months and stay underground any time the temperature is less than 4°C. They also stay underground during very dry weather in summer.

How They're Doing

The total number of Coeur d'Alene Salamanders is small because this species has very specialized



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NO KIDDING!

The Coeur d'Alene Salamander has no lungs. Instead it breathes through its wet skin. This is why it needs high humidity.



The Coeur d'Alene Salamander is so sensitive to moisture and temperature that it comes out only when the weather is damp but not too cold. It spends about seven months of the year without coming to the surface at all!



Twelve million or so years ago, in the Miocene era, North America was a wetter place, with fewer extremes of temperature than we have now. The Coeur d'Alene Salamander was widespread in those days, but as the climate changed, only some areas stayed mild and wet enough for these salamander to survive. This is why they are only found in a few small pockets today. These are called "relict populations."



habitat needs and there is a scarcity of suitable sites. Although several hundred Coeur d'Alene Salamanders were found at one site in Montana, fewer than 20 have been found at any one place in B.C.

The sites where these salamanders live face many threats. Logging removes the shade that helps maintain the moist conditions they need. Land development may also destroy their habitat. Many sites are near highways and are at risk from blasting and other road-building activities. Their habitat is becoming fragmented – removal of forest cover from areas between salamander sites reduces or ends the movements of salamanders between sites and prevents them from moving to new areas.

Another problem for these salamanders is that they like to hide under flat stones near the water's edge. If hikers or horse riders walk on these stones, they can crush the salamanders underneath.

The Coeur d'Alene Salamander has been placed on the Red List in British Columbia, mainly because there are so few sites where it is found. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has designated the Coeur d'Alene Salamander as Vulnerable.

How We're Helping

Most of the locations where the Coeur d'Alene Salamander has been found in British Columbia are on private land. None of these sites are protected at present. Riparian guidelines under the Forest Practices Code provide recommendations for forestry activities along streams on public land. Although this may help to protect suitable salamander habitat, there are no specific legal requirements to protect the habitat.

The Coeur d'Alene Salamander is protected under the British Columbia *Wildlife Act*.

Present range of the Coeur d'Alene Salamander in British Columbia



How You Can Help

Because trampling is such a danger to Coeur d'Alene Salamanders, it is not a good idea to go out searching for them. However, if you do come across one, please notify the Conservation Data Centre in Victoria. Learning more about this species is vitally important to conservation efforts.

You can also help by learning more about these salamanders and about other amphibians, and by telling others about them. You can also learn about ways to protect the wetlands and riparian (areas by streams and ponds) habitats where these animals live, through programs such as Naturescape, BC Wild, and Wetlandkeepers.

You can find out more about the Wildlife Branch and Conservation Data Centre at:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wild/>

Conservation Data Centre
Resources Inventory Branch
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Wildlife Branch
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