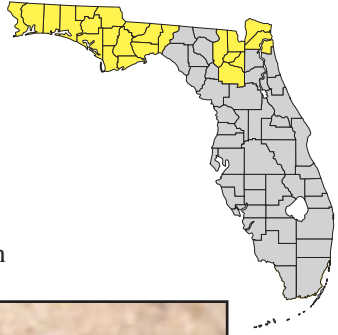


FLATWOODS SALAMANDER

Ambystoma cingulatum



Order:	Caudata
Family:	Ambystomatidae
FNAI Ranks:	G2G3/S2S3
U.S. Status:	Threatened
FL Status:	Species of Special Concern



adult © John Jensen



larva © Dan Hipes

Description: A small to medium-sized (to 4.5 in. = 11.5 cm) salamander with a delicate white to silvery-gray pattern that may resemble nets, lichens, or narrow lines and rings on a black background. Belly black with grayish specks; head relatively small, no groove between nostril and upper lip, tail thick. Aquatic larva to nearly 3 in. (7.5 cm) in length, with bushy reddish gills, a dorsal tail fin, and on each side a tan stripe sandwiched between a pair of dark stripes, including one that passes through eye.

FLATWOODS SALAMANDER *Ambystoma cingulatum*

Similar Species: Marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*) has about a dozen bold white or silver crossbars on back and tail, but sides are black and head larger. Mole salamander (*A. talpoideum*) is plump and plain brown to black with occasional light flecks. Tiger salamander (*A. tigrinum*; see species account), is larger, with many irregular yellowish to olive blotches on body. Larvae of all three, though sometimes appearing striped, lack bold dark stripes on sides. Slimy salamander (*Plethodon grobmani*) is black with many small white spots, has larger head with faint groove running from nostril to lip, and leaves sticky residue when touched.

Habitat: Pine flatwoods (longleaf or slash) communities with wiregrass groundcover and scattered wetlands often dominated by cypress or gum. Usually breeds in ponds that lack predatory fish and which usually have some emergent herbaceous vegetation.

Seasonal Occurrence: Breeds October - December, with adults moving overland to and from ponds at that time. At other times, adults and juveniles remain underground, sometimes in crayfish burrows. Aquatic larvae remain in ponds for 2 - 3 months, usually January - March.

Florida Distribution: Locally distributed in the Florida panhandle and northern peninsula, formerly south to Marion County.

Range-wide Distribution: Lower Southeastern Coastal Plain of southern South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and northern Florida.

Conservation Status: Though declining from habitat loss, populations exist on Apalachicola National Forest, Eglin Air Force Base, and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Local populations can be severely threatened by massive deaths of migrating adults and juveniles attempting to cross roads.

Protection and Management: Protect native pine flatwoods habitats and associated wetlands from intensive forestry that disrupts soil and groundcover vegetation; allow growing-season fires to burn through occupied sites, including dry wetland basins and adjacent uplands. Prevent drainage, deepening, pollution (from livestock, pesticides, or stormwater), and introduction of fish in isolated wetlands. Protect natural upland habitat, with no roads or firebreaks, for at least 1.5 mi. (2.5 km) around breeding ponds, and maintain broad natural connections among breeding sites. Eliminate or control feral hogs, which disrupt habitat and may even eat salamanders.

Selected References: Ashton and Ashton 1988a, Bartlett and Bartlett 1999, Conant and Collins 1991, Georgia DNR 1999, Moler (ed.) 1992, Mount 1975, Petranka 1998, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999a.