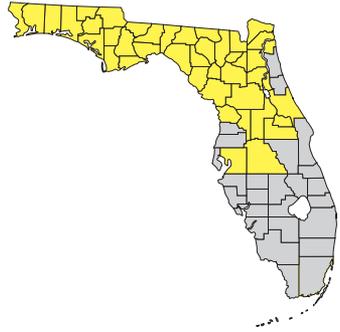


SOUTHERN DUSKY SALAMANDER

Desmognathus auriculatus

Order: Caudata
Family: Plethodontidae
FNAI Ranks: G5/S3
U.S. Status: None
FL Status: None



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Description: A medium-sized (to 5 in. = 127 mm), dark, robust, semi-aquatic salamander with a stout tail that is flattened posteriorly from side to side, hence blade-like. Body, including belly, coal-black but sometimes with a reddish wash and usually with a series of white to reddish spots on sides between legs and continuing onto tail; white specks on belly. Diagonal line below eye often obscured by dark pigment. Hind legs larger than front. Larva coal black with some light spots on sides, bushy black gills.

Similar Species: All dusky salamanders (*Desmognathus*) share the large hind legs and diagonal line beneath eye. Common dusky (*D. cf. D. fuscus*), Apalachicola dusky (*D. apalachicola*; see species account), and seal salamander (*D. monticola*; see species account) have belly that is usually lighter than back and sides, and often paired or fused spots on back. First two usually lack light spots on sides. Slimy salamander (*Plethodon grobmani*) is black covered with white flecks and is sticky to touch.

Habitat: Mucky areas around cypress heads, sphagnum bogs, gum swamps, swampy lake margins, and sluggish stream floodplains under

**SOUTHERN DUSKY
SALAMANDER**

Desmognathus auriculatus

forest canopy. Infrequent in steep ravines with small clear creeks at bottom. Aquatic larvae.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present year-round. Lays eggs in fall. Larvae present December - April.

Florida Distribution: Panhandle and northern peninsula. Probably extirpated from many localities, including several counties shown on map.

Range-wide Distribution: Lower Southeastern Coastal Plain from southeastern Virginia to eastern Texas.

Conservation Status: Uncertain but may be in sharp decline. Some populations still occur on Apalachicola National Forest and possibly Osceola National Forest.

Protection and Management: Determine cause of disappearance of seemingly protected populations. Acquire remaining lands supporting unprotected populations. Maintain forest on slopes and uplands above stream systems, and prevent siltation and pollution. Avoid wetland drainage. 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, Means 1975, Mount 1975, Petranka 1998.