



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW TIME (04:12)

**CALIFORNIA TIGER SALAMANDER (HOST – BRYNN WALLING WITH
ANDREA ADAMS)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by FWS Endangered Species Program

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Music plays.)

MS. WALLING: This is Brynn Walling for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And today I have Andrea Adams on the phone. Hi, Andrea.

MS. ADAMS: Hi, Brynn.

MS. WALLING: Andrea is a Fish and Wildlife Service biologist in the Ventura Field Office, and today she's going to tell us about the California tiger salamander. Could you start us off by giving us an overview of the species?

MS. ADAMS: Sure. So the California tiger salamander is what's called an ambystoma salamander, which basically means that they live underground for most of their lives. And this type of salamander is referred to as a mole salamander for this reason. And they're black and they have yellow spots. And the California tiger salamander is only known from Central California. They live most of their lives underground in the burrows of other animals, and when they're ready to breed, usually when they're four or five years old, they've been known to walk over a mile from their underground burrow to a breeding pond.

And some marked animals have even been found to be over 20 years old in the wild. So the California tiger salamander is listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened in the Central California portions of its range and endangered in the Sonoma and Santa Barbara County portions of its range.

MS. WALLING: What are the primary threats to this species?

MS. ADAMS: One of the primary threats to the species is habitat loss. So several human activities including agricultural conversion, urbanization and road building destroy the underground habitats that the salamanders depend on. And another primary threat to the California tiger salamander is non-native tiger salamanders.

So these are introduced from the Central United States to be used as fish bait, and when these non-native tiger salamanders enter a native California tiger salamander's breeding pond they can hybridize with them and this causes the loss of the native California tiger salamander genes in the population. They've also been known to grow faster and larger than the natives and prey upon the native California tiger salamanders and other native entities in the pond ecosystem.

MS. WALLING: And what are some key components to conserving the California tiger salamander in its habitat?

MS. ADAMS: One of the major ways that California tiger salamanders can be conserved is through responsible land use farming, that we really encourage. And most of the California tiger salamander's habitat occurs on private land. So the service has several programs to work with private landowners and create incentives for voluntary conservation practices on their land.

MS. WALLING: Who are some partners that you work with to conserve the species?

MS. ADAMS: Sure. So as I mentioned before, many private landowners that undertake voluntary conservation are primary for the conservation of the species. But there also are local land trusts including the California Rangeland Trust and several universities including the University of California Davis, and the University of California Santa Barbara.

We also work closely with other agencies, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.

MS. WALLING: Very cool. And could you tell us how and why is the California tiger salamander important to salamander habitat in general?

MS. ADAMS: Sure. So, California tiger salamanders are really unique because they're adapted to living with the unpredictable rainfall patterns that are typical to California. The rainfall can vary significantly from year-to-year. And they've developed the ability to withstand droughts that can last for years. So they're an amphibian that is uniquely suited to adapt to a changing climate.

MS. WALLING: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us today?

MS. ADAMS: Sure. I think it's – you know in talking about California tiger salamander habitat, it's important to note that they're also the top aquatic predators in their native pond ecosystems. And this is important because the runoff from the surrounding landscape collects high levels of nutrients into the ponds, and then these nutrients support the growth of phytoplankton that frogs, tadpoles and insects feed on. And when the California tiger salamanders feed on the tadpoles and the insects, they take those nutrients back into the uplands when they migrate away from the ponds when they mature.

So they're key to keeping nutrient balance in the ecosystem. And also like tadpoles, baby salamander larvae are an important food source for some species of snakes, birds and small mammals.

MS. WALLING: Well, thank you very much, Andrea, for sharing all of this today.

MS. ADAMS: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

MS. WALLING: Bye-bye.