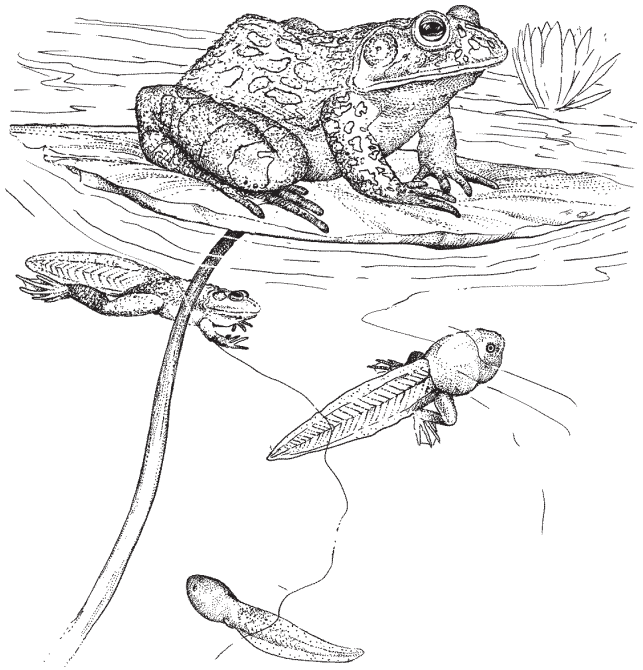
Oregon Caves National Monument

AMPHIBIANS



Amphibians have an intimate link to water as part of their life cycle but as adults they may be found in many places along trails or sometimes inside Oregon Caves.

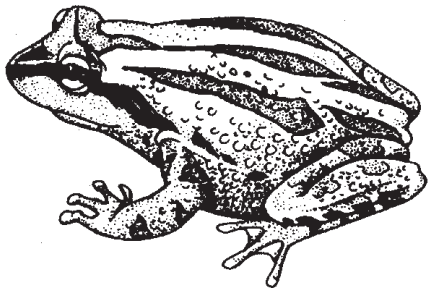
The frog in the well knows nothing of the great ocean.
- Japanese proverb.

Amphibians are disappearing; and why we should be concerned.

Never have there been so many amphibian extinctions in such a short time span as today. Amphibians are an important indicator species that can help to determine the health of an ecosystem. Our lives are intertwined with these moist-skinned creatures, we breathe the same air, and drink the same water. When extinctions occur among species whose roots on this planet surpass ours by millions of years, we should be listening to what they have to say...

tailed frog

The Tailed Frog is Ascaphus truei. It belongs to a primitive family of frogs that has a 'tail' to internally fertilize the eggs. Other characteristics of this genus are that it has muscles to wag the tail, free floating ribs(which other frogs don't have) and its tongue is attached at the back of the mouth, unlike other frogs. Tailed frogs live in and near rock-strewn streams that have cold fast-flowing water.



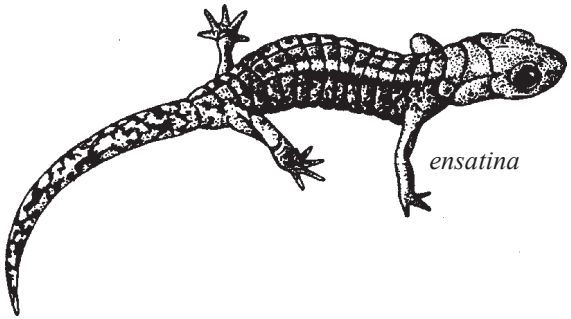
Pacific tree frog

The Pacific Tree Frog is Hyla regilla. It is one of the smallest but loudest amphibians of the Pacific Northwest. It can change colors to green and brown tones in a few minutes. The color change is related to the temperature and amount of moisture in the air, not the backround color as in most amphibians. This color change gives it protection of camouflage.

spotted frog

The Oregon Spotted Frog is Rana pretiosa. Its status is endangered. The specialized habitat requirements of the Oregon Spotted Frog have made it extremely vulnerable to extinction. The frog lives in floodplain wetlands associated with permanent water bodies and prefers the warm, shallow edge of marshes to lay its eggs.

The three salamanders illustrated below are all in the same family, Plethodontidae. These are called lungless salamanders because they have no lungs and breathe by absorbing oxygen through their skin. All western species are completely terrestrial. They live under rocks, bark, logs, and in rotten wood and animal burrows. Terrestrial forms rarely enter water. They lay eggs in moist places where the eggs develop directly into juveniles, completely bypassing the free-living larval stage characteristic of most amphibians.



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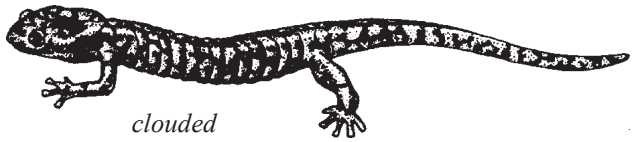
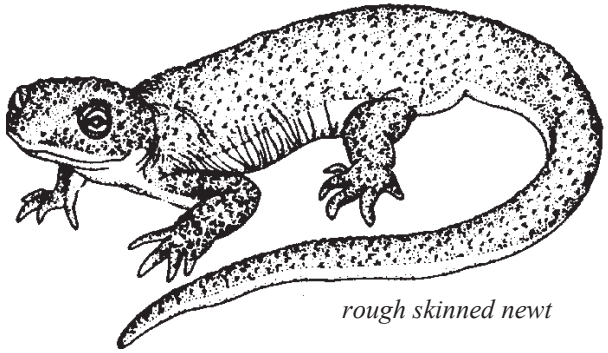
Del Norte salamander

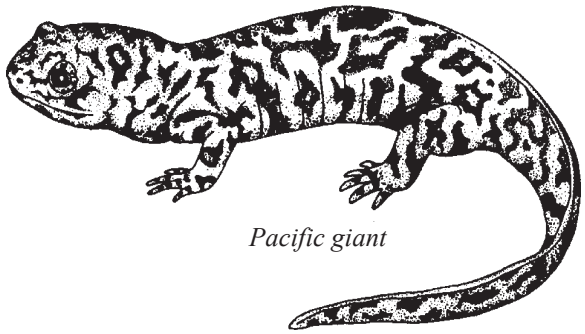


clouded salamander



rough skinned newt

The Rough Skin Newt (*Taricha granulosa)* is commonly found in lakes near to Oregon Caves. Oregon has only one species of this family. The smaller individuals are terrestrial and posses a skin which feels rough because of many fine bumps or papilliae over it. Adults may be found in water, where the skin becomes smoother. In coloration they range from light to dark brown on the back, and from yellow to deep orange on the belly.



Pacific giant

The Pacific Giant Salamander is in the family Dicamptodontidae. Adults wander forests during the wet season and then retreat to streams during the breeding season. Adults can grow up to twelve inches. This salamander can also bark when frightened.

Salamander fossils of Oregon Caves.

Less than two years ago, an unusual type of fossil was discovered in Oregon Caves. Dr Jim Meade of Northern Arizona University did some studies on small fossils (micro fossils) near one of the entrances to the cave. Among the many fossils found were an unusually large number of salamander fossils. These delicate bones were probably preserved by the stable temperatures of the cave as well as the alkaline soils of the cave which are known to favor the preservation of bones. As a result of the research, Oregon Caves in now recognized as one of the few salamander fossil localities in the world.