

Ensatina and the Department of Defense



Picture by: Paul Block

The Ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*) is a lungless salamander that breathes through smooth, thin, moist skin. This species lives a terrestrial life and escapes predation by secreting a noxious substance or detaching its tail.

Description: Adults are typically 1.5 to 3 inches (3.8 to 7.6 cm) in body length. They are orange, brown, or black on their back, yellow or white on their underside, and frequently have red, orange, or yellow markings on top of their legs. They can be identified by the narrowing of the base of the tail, giving it a swollen appearance.

Range: Populations occur from southwestern British Columbia in Canada, south through the Coastal Ranges, Cascade Range, and Sierra Nevada of the USA, to extreme northwestern Baja California and the Sierra de san Pedro Martir and Sierra Juárez of Mexico. The total population size probably exceeds 100,000 individuals.



Source: IUCN

Habitat: Typical habitats include moist, coniferous, deciduous, and mixed forests, oak woodlands, and chaparral. This species is often found in or under woody debris, including downed logs and bark piles at the base of trees.

Behavior: Inactive during cold, hot, and dry weather. Emerges in fall during the rainy season and usually remains active until the end of May or June. Breeding occurs primarily in fall and spring, but may also occur in the winter. Females lay and brood eggs under bark, in rotting logs, or underground. There is no aquatic larval stage. Feeds on a variety of invertebrates, including insects (e.g., beetles, and crickets), springtails (tiny arthropods that superficially resemble insects), spiders, and millipedes.

Conservation Status: The Ensatina is not federally listed under the Endangered Species Act. NatureServe lists this species as G5 –Secure, and the IUCN ranks the species as Least Concern. Its populations are considered stable.

Threats: Habitat loss, alteration, and fragmentation, climate change, collection for the pet trade, and disease are all threats to this species.

Occurrence on Military Lands

Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on 16 military installations across its range.	Up to an additional 21 military installations across its range.

