



Getting to Know Arizona Wildlife Meet the Sonoran Tiger Salamander



Tiger Salamander photo courtesy of USFWS

If you live on the Arizona-Mexico border, you have a chance of seeing an adorable, loveable reptile known as the Sonoran tiger salamander. Sonoran tiger salamanders are black with big yellow spots. They have tiny yellow eyes with large black irises in the middle and they have wide snouts. They are 3.0 to 6.5 inches long and weigh 60 to 100 grams. They can live to be fourteen years of age.

In order to breed (from January to May), Sonoran tiger salamanders need temporary pools of water to lay their eggs. It can take one to two days for a Sonoran tiger salamander female to lay 200 to 2,000 eggs. The eggs then hatch in two to four weeks. Younger salamanders have the ability to become terrestrial adults in less than two months. If they become terrestrial, they

will move 250 meters to 2 kilometers from their pond, where they dig burrows up to two feet deep. If their habitat has permanent water, they can become branchiate (they have gills) adults instead and stay in water for the rest of their lives. Little salamanders eat zooplankton. As they grow up, they eat animals similar to zooplankton, but bigger, as well as their eggs, larvae, and insects.

Sonoran tiger salamanders are endangered because of habitat loss. The weather causes floods that wipe out their water homes. Humans build cities and houses on top of the Sonoran tiger salamanders' living area as well. Floods, droughts, buildings, and roads have destroyed the places where Sonoran tiger salamanders live, which is why they are now endangered. We need to protect them because they are vital for Earth. They eat pests that destroy crops. They also recycle nutrients back into the soil, making the world healthier for other animals, plants, and humans.

We must keep these cute animals alive to make the world a better place for everything. That includes you.

By Alexandra White She is 13 years old, lives in Buckeye, AZ and is part of Sierra Club's Wildlife Activist Group