



## Reptiles and Amphibians



### Crater Lake National Park's Most Tenacious Residents

Moist west winds from the Pacific Ocean rise over the remaining slopes of ancient Mt. Mazama, dispersing a deep and long-lasting blanket of snow. It is surprising that animals whose lives are so directly affected by cold temperatures exist under these conditions. Mother Nature has given these creatures an even greater tenacity to carry on the struggle for life, and long winters and short summers have become their lifestyle.

### Reptiles

Reptiles are cold-blooded animals with dry, scale-covered skin. They have claws, if legs are present. Legs, eyelids, and ears are lacking in snakes but are usually present in lizards. Lizards feed on insects, spiders, and other small creatures; garter snakes feed on fish, toads, frogs, tadpoles, worms, and salamanders. Reptiles breed on land, laying eggs or giving birth to young. These four species of reptile are most common in the park:

**Northern Sagebrush Lizard (*Sceloporus graciosus*):** This species lives on the ground and is infrequently observed in the park. Most observations have been made in open dry areas such as Cleetwood Cove, Wineglass, The Pinnacles, and in the panhandle of the park. Its tail will break off easily if a predator grabs hold of it, allowing the lizard to escape. A new tail will grow back to replace the missing one. The length at maturity is 5 inches. It is gray or brown with blotches or cross-bars and light dorsolateral stripes, usually with orange on the neck and sides. The belly has blue patches and the throat is a white-speckled blue, although females may lack the blue altogether. The Western Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) is also found in the park.

**Short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma douglassii*):** This infrequently-seen ground-dwelling lizard has been observed in Bear, Sand, and Wheeler Creek drainages. It prefers soft soil in well-exposed sunny areas. It is live-bearing, producing 24 or more young in one litter. It is blue-gray, 4 inches long, with very small horns on the back of its head. It

may squirt a small stream of blood from a sinus at the base of its eyes when frightened. Ants are a favorite food.

**Northern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria coerulea*):** This secretive lizard is occasionally seen in dense vegetation or rocky areas with sunny exposures. Specimens from the park represent the intergradation of two subspecies: *E.c. principis*, the northern alligator lizard, and *E.c. shastensis*, the Shasta alligator lizard. The tail will break off easily if pulled. The color is greenish, heavily blotched or barred with a dusky shading. The adult is 10 inches in length.

**Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*):** This snake has been observed along the lake shore, on Wizard Island, and near other water courses and bog areas of the park. It is black, brownish, or gray with red blotches, with a yellow streak running down its back and on each side. A completely black phase is found within the caldera of Crater Lake and may have evolved as a result of protective coloration against black volcanic rocks. It grows to 3 feet in length.

**Other Species:** Also found within the park, but less common, are the Western Pond Turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*); Southern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*); Pine Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*); Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae*); Western Skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*); Northwestern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis ordinoides*); Western Terrestrial Garter Snake (*Thamnophis elegans*); and Racer (*Coluber constrictor*).

## Amphibians

Amphibians are cold-blooded animals with soft, moist skin, devoid of scales or claws. They are usually associated with water or moist areas. Most amphibians return to water to lay eggs. They feed upon insects, worms, spiders, and other small creatures. These eight species are most common in the park:

**Northwestern Salamander (*Ambystoma gracile*):**

This salamander has been found in the northwest corner of the park. It is rarely seen except during its breeding season when it travels to ponds, lakes, and streams. The eggs are laid in large jelly-like masses, and the larva usually transforms into an adult the first year but may not do so in cold climates until the second year. Its color is entirely brown or black. It grows to 6 inches in length. There are large glands on the head and along the top of the tail which secrete a sticky white poison, helping to protect it from predators.

**Long-toed Salamander (*Ambystoma***

***macrodactylum*):** This species is found throughout the park, including the shores of Crater Lake. It is common in the spring under rocks and logs. It breeds in ponds, lakes, and quiet streams, sometimes when the water is still covered with ice. The eggs are laid singly in water. The larva may not transform until the second year. It is dusky or black and usually has a broken yellow stripe down its back with white specks on its sides. It grows to 6 inches in length.

**Rough-Skinned Newt (*Taricha granulosa*):** Two subspecies are found within the park. The Northern Rough-Skinned Newt is found along moist water courses and bog areas on the western side of the park. The Crater Lake Newt is found only within the caldera of Crater Lake. It differs from the Northern Rough-Skinned Newt in being heavily marked with black or dark brown on its ventral surface. Newts possess a potent skin secretion which helps protect them from most predators. They are aquatic for a good part of the year, breeding in lakes, ponds, and slow-moving streams. The eggs are laid singly. The color is black to dark brown on the upper surface and yellow or reddish-orange below. They grow to 8 inches in length.

**Oregon Salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*):**

These salamanders have been observed at Annie Spring, Vidae Falls, Red Blanket Creek, and in the panhandle of the park, and are usually found under moist logs, bark, or rocks. The Oregon Salamander has no lungs and breathes through its moist, slippery skin. It is terrestrial, laying its eggs on land. The young are fully formed when hatched. They

are brown to orange in color, 5 inches long, with a constricted tail base.

**Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*):** This species inhabits cold running streams and has been observed in Bybee, Copeland, and Castle Creeks. It is unique in that fertilization is internal. The eggs are laid in rosary-like strings under stones in running streams. The tadpoles have a large sucker-like mouth which helps them cling to rocks in running water. The frog lacks an external ear and is voiceless. It is olive, brown, gray, or sometimes reddish. It is rather flat-bodied and toad-like, 2 inches long. The males have a tail-like copulatory organ with the vent located at its tip.

**Boreal Toad (*Bufo boreas*):** This species is found throughout the park. It is usually active at night, but may be found during the day along streams and moist meadows. It breeds in Crater Lake and quiet ponds and streams. The eggs are laid in long jelly strings. The tadpoles transform into small toads during the first year. Its color is gray or greenish, often tinged with red. There is a light colored stripe down its back and dark blotches on the ventral surface. This toad has numerous warts. It grows up to 5 inches.

**Pacific Treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*):** This species is found throughout the park. It is not restricted to water courses but may be found in moist areas. It is often seen during the day. The color varies from green, brown, gray, gold, or black, with a black eye stripe, and it can change colors in a few minutes. Its length is 2 inches. The Pacific Treefrog is commonly heard in the evening during spring and summer. It will breed in almost any pond or pool. The eggs are found in small jelly masses attached to debris in the water. Tadpoles transform into small frogs the first year.

**Cascades Frog (*Rana cascadae*):** This frog is commonly found along all water courses in the park and is usually seen sunning along banks where it can retreat into water to escape its enemies. It matures in 3 years. The eggs are laid in jelly clusters in permanent bodies of water. Its length is 2.5 inches. It has sharply defined inky black spots on the back and dark spotting on the legs. The abdomen and under side of the hind legs are yellow.

**Other Species:** Other amphibians less commonly found in the park include the Pacific Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon tenebrosus*); Clouded Salamander (*Aneides ferreus*); Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*); Dunn's Salamander (*Plethodon dunni*); and Crater Lake Newt (*Taricha granulosa Mazamae*).