

Ozark Blind Salamander

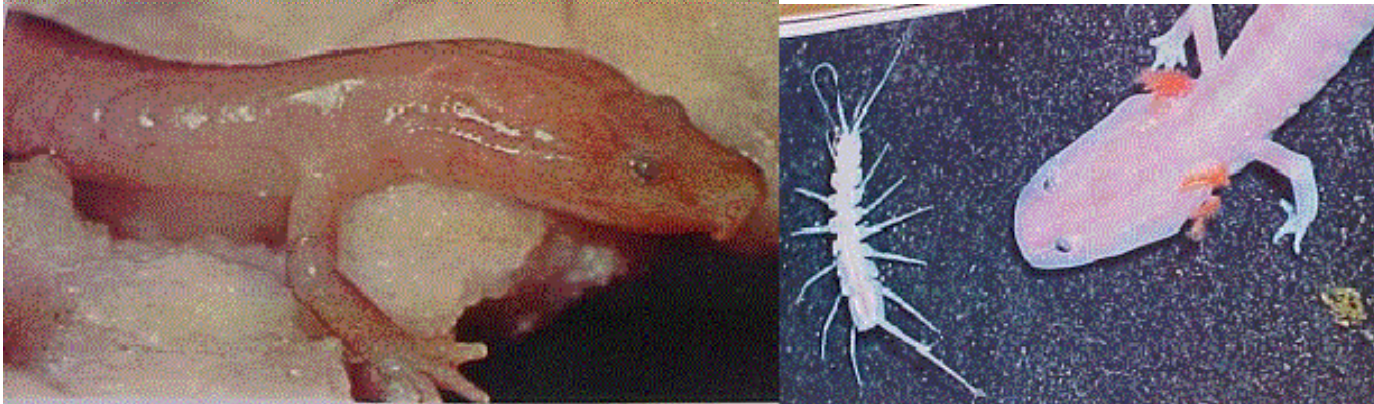


What does an Ozark blind cave salamander look like?

Slender and ghostly pale, the fully transformed adult Ozark blind salamander is three to four inches long. Its gills have disappeared, and its eyelids have grown together over small, nonfunctional eyes. The adult salamander moves freely in and out of water. It usually lives deeper in caves where the larval is formed. The salamander lives in cave streams and pools but sometimes ventures aboveground. Unlike the adult, it has eyes, conspicuous coloration, and plume like gills. As the larval Ozark blind salamander approaches metamorphosis, it gradually loses pigmentation, its gills begin to regress, and its eyes become smaller in proportion to its head.

What does an Ozark cave salamander eat?

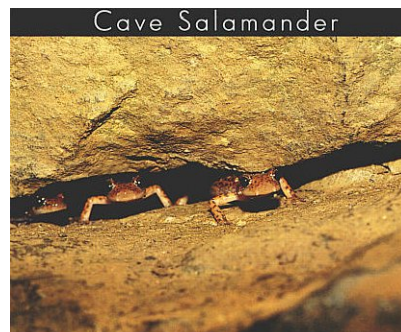
Already losing the use of its eyes, the maturing larva begins to depend more on vibrations sensed through its lateral line system in order to locate isopods, flatworms, and other small prey.



A blind cave salamander stalking its prey, a white isopod.

What type of habitat does an Ozark blind salamander like?

Most salamanders are terrestrial as adults, living near water or in wet vegetation, but some are aquatic and a few are arboreal, burrowing, or cave-dwelling. Most are nocturnal, and all avoid direct light. Salamanders are able to regenerate a lost limb or tail.



What are the Ozark blind cave salamanders breeding habits?

Most salamanders breed in water. The eggs, surrounded by gelatinous material, are usually laid in ponds or brooks, where they develop into aquatic larvae that can breathe by means of gills. A few salamanders breed on land, laying their eggs under rotting vegetation; the young pass through the gilled stage in the egg, emerging as miniature adults.

