North African Fire Salamander
*Salamandra algira* Bedriaga, 1883

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**Description**

The first mention of the genus *Salamandra* in Morocco was made by Boulenger (1890), based on material originated from the ‘Benider Hills near Tanger’. Subsequent collectors could not verify this claim, which led to doubts on the actual presence of *Salamandra* in Morocco (e.g. Hediger, 1935 and references therein). By the mid-twentieth century however a considerable number of records had been published (Pasteur & Bons, 1959), although information on *S. algira* remained particularly scarce. Recent publications have provided detailed accounts of distribution, reproductive behaviour and updated taxonomy (Donaire-Barroso & Bogaerts, 2001; Donaire-Barroso et al. 2001; Bogaerts & Donaire-Barroso, 2003; Donaire-Barroso & Bogaerts, 2003; Bogaerts et al. 2007). *Salamandra algira* was divided into two subspecies by Donaire-Barroso and Bogaerts (2003), by separation of *S. a. tingitana* from the nominate *S. a. algira*. Escoriza et al. (2006) rediscovered *S. algira* in the northeast Moroccan Beni Snassen Massif, and subsequently described the population as *S. a. spelaea* based on mitochondrial and morphological evidence (Escoriza & Mar Comas, 2007). Populations in the Rif- and Middle Atlas mountains represent a still undescribed taxon (Steinfartz et al. 2000).
Salamandra algira tingitana is characterized by a lack of red, and low degree of yellow coloration which diminishes as individuals mature. Melanistic individuals are not uncommon in this subspecies. Populations of S. a. ssp from the Rif Mountains are characterized by a high amount of red coloration, which occurs to a lesser extent in populations from the Middle Atlas Mountains. Salamandra algira spelaea is characterized by a low amount of red coloration, and occasionally shows white dots in the lateral, gular and ventral regions which has also been described from nearby Algerian populations (Escoirza & Mar Comas, 2007).
Ecology and habits

The activity of *S. algira* is limited to humid, rainy nights during which individuals come to the surface to forage and reproduce. During the day and outside of the activity season, *S. algira* stays hidden under logs, rocks or similar surface materials. The activity period of *S. a. tingitana* takes place in winter, while activity of the other *S. algira* populations is largely limited to spring and autumn, as these live at higher altitudes. Larvae of ovoviviparous populations are deposited in springs, brooks and ponds during autumn.

Distribution, habitat and abundance in the study area

The occurrence of *Salamandra algira* in Morocco is limited to humid mountain ranges in the north and centre of the country. Viviparous populations of *S. a. tingitana* inhabit Mediterranean-faced mountain ranges of the Tingitana peninsula, while ovoviviparous populations occupy the western Atlantic-faced ranges (Beukema et al., 2010).
Salamandra algira *ssp.* occurs in the Rif- and Middle Atlas Mountains where it can reach high densities in suitable habitat composed of humid mature forests, brooks and rocky outcrops. *Salamandra algira spelaea* has so far only been found between 600-1300 m in the Beni Snassen Massif, occupying limestone outcrops and granite soils within diverse types of forests that appear between these altitudinal ranges, often close to water bodies. Only few individuals of this subspecies have been found up to date.

**Bibliography:**


