

CHEOAH BALD SALAMANDER

Plethodon Cheoah

vulnerable



Photography courtesy of: Todd Pierson

LOCATION

- North Carolina, in the vicinity of Cheoah Bald in Nantahala National Forest (Graham and Swain counties)

ELEVATION

- High elevations (at least 3,200–5,000 feet)

HABITAT

- Moderately-moist hardwood forests (optimal)
- Rock outcrops/talus slopes
- Second-growth forest
- Can persist in relatively small patches of habitat

IDENTIFICATION

- Dark-gray bodies with light-gray cheek patches
- Often have red or red-speckled legs
- When threatened, release noxious, sticky skin secretions to deter predators

SIZE

- 1.75 to 2.5 inches (45–60 mm) long from snout to vent
- Roughly the length of an AA battery

BEHAVIOR

- Day: takes refuge under rotting logs, leaf litter, or rocks (including shaded outcrops)
- Night: prowls the forest floor

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

(when benefitting amphibians and reptiles is secondary to other management objectives)

MODERATELY-MOIST HARDWOOD FORESTS (OPTIMAL HABITAT)

- Minimize ground disturbance when possible; maintain duff layer (decomposing organic material)
- Avoid or minimize logging sensitive habitats such as seasonal wetlands/pools, seeps, and ravines
- Protect and manage mature hardwood stands
- Use natural regeneration when possible
- Allow dead trees and woody debris to decompose naturally on the ground
- Maintain a mix of forest types and ages, including openings
- Carefully monitor use of insecticides for control of gypsy moth and other invasive insects – these can affect non-target insects
- Maintain and, where necessary, restore the natural fire regime (some hardwood communities benefit from infrequent, low-intensity burns – consult a certified forester)
- Support research efforts aimed at restoring American chestnut and hemlock
- Control pedestrian and motorized vehicle access, including ATVs
- Stabilize roads and trails if erosion is a problem

ROCK OUTCROPS/TALUS SLOPES

- Minimize soil erosion and soil disturbances uphill from outcrop or talus areas
- Restore outcrops that have been invaded by native or non-native plants that shade the area



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REFERENCES

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