

Identification Notes for wildlife law enforcement

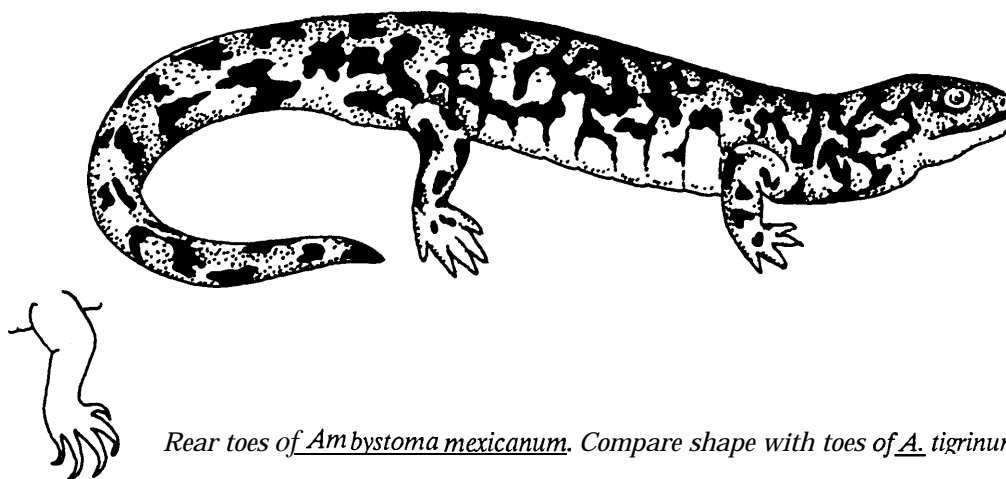
CATEGORY AMPHIBIAN

Scientific Name/s: *Ambystoma mexicanum*,
A. tigrinum

Common Name/s: Axolotl
Tiger Salamander

PROBLEM: Neotenic (=adult specimens that retain juvenile characteristics; in this case gills and aquatic lifestyle) salamanders of the genus *Ambystoma* are **exported** in tropical fish and "reptile" shipments from all warm climate ports. *Ambystoma tigrinum* is a native U. S. species, *A. mexicanum* may be extinct in the wild but is easily bred in captivity; ***A. mexicanum* is regulated by trade laws and requires permits.**

Non-neotenic (transformed) form of Ambystoma tigrinum. Note shape of toes.



Rear toes of Ambystoma mexicanum. Compare shape with toes of A. tigrinum, above.

GUIDE TO IDENTIFICATION OF *A. mexicanum*:

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Usually black or white, belly spotted | 2..... |
| | Usually tan, olive, or greyish, belly often pigmented, but usually not spotted..... | 3. |
| 2. | Toes straight, slender..... | <i>A. mexicanum</i> |
| 3. | Toes wide at base, narrowing at the tip..... | <i>A. tigrinum</i> |

FROM: Midwestern and southeastern U.S. breeders, often in tropical fish shipments to be **exported**.

REFERENCES:

Brandon, R. A. 1989. Natural history of the Axolotl and its relationship to other Ambystomatid salamanders. pp. 15-21
in: Armstrong, J. B., & G. M. Malacinski (Eds). Developmental Biology of the Axolotl. Oxford Univ. Press, NY & Oxford.

Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh (CM) specimens: CM 26625, *A. mexicanum*, from MEXICO: Dist. Fed.; Xochimilco and CM 39476 (part), *A. tigrinum velasci*, from MEXICO: Puebla; Laguna del Carmen.