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SALAMANDERS AND NEWTS

Marbled Salamander

Ambystoma opacum

Ambystoma opacum is a small, stocky salamander of 9-11 cm from eastern North America, black with crossbands of white or silvery grey. The species has an unusual breeding biology: mating and egg-laying take place on land in autumn, and the female stays with the eggs until rain fills the hollow and the larvae hatch. The adults live hidden and do best kept cool.

Family: Ambystomatidae Former name: *Salamandra armigera; Salamandra fasciata* **Mild skin toxins**

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**9-11 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**4-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Temperate woodland and meadow**
Skin toxins	**Mild** Wash your hands after contact and keep your fingers away from your eyes and mouth
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**40 × 25 × 25 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**18-24 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**80-95%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 1-2 cm
UVB	**Not required**
Diet	**Insects and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Larvae in water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Sexually mature	**12-24 months**
Eggs per season	**50-200**
Clutches per year	**1**
Larval period	**60-270 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Other larvae and small aquatic invertebrates (daphnia, mosquito larvae)**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
There is little knowledge about the husbandry of *Ambystoma opacum*, and the advice on substrate and water is partly borrowed from the closely related *Ambystoma maculatum* and *Ambystoma tigrinum*, which are kept far more often.

TEMPERATURE
By day the temperature should be 18-24 °C, and at night it can be a couple of degrees cooler, 16-20 °C. The species tolerates cold better than heat, and above 30 °C for long periods it can die.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING
The substrate must be damp, but never wet or muddy, because the animal absorbs water through its skin. A damp substrate corresponds to 80-95% humidity. Mist the substrate with chlorine-free water when the surface looks dry.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY
Adults are poor swimmers, and the species drowns if it cannot get out of the water. Deep dishes and water sections must therefore be avoided.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species is nocturnal and lives hidden, so it does not need special lighting and does not need UVB either. UV light can damage the eyes and skin of amphibians, and larvae must not be exposed to it.

FEEDING
Adults eat crawling and flying insects, worms and small snails: crickets, earthworms and compost worms, and occasionally waxworms. The feeder animals must be smaller than the animal's head.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
Adults lie hidden most of the time and come out at night to hunt. The species does not bite humans. Outside the breeding season the animals live alone, and males in particular bite each other on the snout if they meet.

NATIVE RANGE
United States.