

STRINATI'S CAVE SALAMANDER

SCIENTIFIC NAME: **Speleomantes strinatii**

CONSERVATION STATUS: **Endangered (EN)**

FACT FILE

- CLASS: AMPHIBIA
- ORDER: URODELA
- FAMILY: PLETHODONTIDAE
- GENUS: SPELEOMANTES
- SIZE: 10-12 cm
- BREATHES THROUGH ITS SKIN
- RAPID PROJECTILE TONGUE FOR CATCHING PREY



The Strinati's cave salamander is an Endangered amphibian protected under European legislation. In France it occurs only within the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, primarily in the limestone massifs of the Maritime Alps near the Italian border. Its wider range extends into north-western Italy. Populations are naturally fragmented due to the patchy distribution of suitable rocky and subterranean habitats.



LIFE CYCLE

The species has direct development and does not pass through an aquatic tadpole stage. Females lay small clutches of eggs in protected underground sites. The eggs develop slowly and hatch directly into miniature salamanders. Females may guard the clutch for several months until hatching.



IDENTIFICATION

Adults measure approximately 10 to 12 centimetres in total length including the tail. The body is slender with smooth moist skin, reflecting its ability to breathe entirely through the skin rather than lungs. Colouration is typically brown or grey with marbled or mottled patterning that provides camouflage against damp rock surfaces. Females are usually slightly larger than males.

HABITAT

Despite its name, this salamander is not restricted to caves. It inhabits humid environments such as caves, rock fissures, shaded ravines and damp woodland. It requires stable temperatures and high humidity. Individuals are most active at night or during wet conditions and retreat underground during dry or cold periods.

A HIDDEN CAVE SALAMANDER OF THE LIMESTONE CAVES OF THE PACA REGION

DIET

Strinati's cave salamander feeds on small invertebrates including insects and spiders. Prey is captured using a rapid projectile tongue. As a predator of woodland and cave-edge invertebrates it contributes to maintaining ecological balance within humid habitats.

THREATS

Key threats include disturbance of cave systems, quarrying, changes in forest cover and climate change, particularly increasing drought. Because the species depends on constant moisture, even small environmental changes can have significant impacts.

CONSERVATION

The species is legally protected and occurs within several protected areas in the PACA region. Conservation measures focus on safeguarding cave systems, maintaining forest canopy to preserve humidity and monitoring populations to detect change.

WHY IT MATTERS

Strinati's cave salamander is an indicator of healthy humid woodland and karst ecosystems. Protecting it helps conserve the wider biodiversity of the Maritime Alps and the fragile subterranean environments on which many species depend.

