

Notes on a Mount Lyell Salamander Observed near Nevada Falls, Yosemite National Park, California—Revisited Ten Years Later

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The Mount Lyell Salamander (*Hydromantes platycephalus*; Plethodontidae, lungless salamanders; Figure 1) is endemic to the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. The species is typically found in talus slopes of granite where water is present. Favored habitats include granite bedrock with a thin film of flowing water sourcing from snow melt at an elevational range of 4000–12,000 ft (1220–3660 m; Amphibia Web 2016). The salamander is active during the late spring into summer and does not retreat from the surface until July at higher elevations and August to September at lower elevations (Stebbins and McGinnis 2012). The species was previously listed as a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, but has now been downgraded to Watch List status (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2016).

We reported observing a Mount Lyell Salamander along the John Muir Trail, near Nevada Falls, in Yosemite National Park on 9 September 2006 (Clark and Hagen 2008). A single salamander was observed along the edge of a granite wall with snow melt flowing along the face. Ten years later, on 9 September 2016, we revisited the same location and observed another Mount Lyell Salamander within 30 ft (~10 m) of our previous observation. The elevation was 6049 ft (2118 m) with a temperature of 72° F (22° C). Floral conditions were similar: wildflowers, moss, forbs, and ferns were present within the microhabitat. We confirmed the presence of 7–8 Sierran Treefrogs (*Pseudacris sierra*; Figure 2), a species we also observed in 2006.

Thomson et al. (2016) argue that the species appears to be stable throughout most of its range and is not experiencing any risk of decline. Additional populations have been found since the 1990s and the species is rather common at some sites. Our observations in 2006 and again in 2016 somewhat support this assertion. Although a small sample size, we were able to find the species with minimal effort within suitable microhabitat. However, Stebbins and McGinnis (2012) recommend that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife remain vigilant and, in areas where ground disturbance from development is proposed, require surveys for the Mount Lyell Salamander and mitigate accordingly.

Our observation was submitted to the California Natural Diversity Database on 11 September 2016 along with Figure 1.



Figure 1. Mount Lyell Salamander (*Hydromantes platycephalus*). Photo by Howard O. Clark, Jr.

Literature Cited

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Figure 2. Sierran Treefrog (*Pseudacris sierra*). Photo by Howard O. Clark, Jr.

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