

[Back](#)

[Print this page](#)

Chinese giant salamander

Chinese giant salamander is the largest salamander in the world. Adult Chinese giant salamanders can reach almost 6 feet (1.8 meters) in length, but most measure around 3 1/2 feet (1 meter) long. Large individuals can weigh as much as 100 pounds (45 kilograms), though most weigh much less. Chinese giant salamanders have long, flat bodies with shovel-shaped heads. Their blotchy, wrinkled skin ranges in color from dark brown to bright orange. They live in China in lakes and in the tributaries of three rivers: (1) the Huang He (Yellow River), (2) the Yangtze, and (3) the Zhu Jiang (Pearl River). The salamanders live below about 5,000 feet (1,500 meters) of elevation.



Picture
Chinese giant
salamander

Chinese giant salamanders spend their lives in cool, rocky streams or lakes. They have tiny eyes with no eyelids and poor vision. They hunt mainly at night using their sense of smell and ability to detect motion in the water. Chinese giant salamanders eat a variety of fish, amphibians, and many kinds of *invertebrates* (animals without backbones).

A female Chinese giant salamander typically lays about 400 to 600 eggs in an underwater cavity, which the male then guards. The eggs hatch after about 50 to 90 days. After hatching, the young take many years to mature. Chinese giant salamanders can live about 30 years in the wild, or more than 50 years in captivity.

Chinese giant salamanders are in great danger of becoming extinct. Dams have changed the flow of water and silt in many streams, reducing salamander habitat. Pollution of streams and lakes is also a problem for these animals. People collect Chinese giant salamanders for the pet trade, for use in traditional medicine, and for food. Harvesting these salamanders from the wild is illegal. The Chinese government has established a number of nature reserves to protect giant salamanders.

Two close relatives of the Chinese giant salamander are also large. The Japanese giant salamander can reach about 5 feet (1.5 meters) long. Hellbenders, which live in the eastern United States, can grow to about 2 1/2 feet (0.8 meters) long.

Scientific classification.

The Chinese giant salamander's scientific name is *Andrias davidianus*. The Japanese giant salamander is *A. japonicus*. The hellbender is *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*.

Contributor:

• Deanna H. Olson, Ph.D., Research Ecologist, US Forest Service.

How to cite this article:

To cite this article, World Book recommends the following format:

Olson, Deanna H. "Chinese giant salamander." World Book Student. World Book, 2009. Web. 10 July 2009 .

To learn about citing sources, see [Help](#).

[Reference Center Home](#) | [About World Book](#) | [Customer Training Guide](#) | [Site Contents](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Help](#)
[Subscriber News](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Only Authorized Users are permitted to access and to utilize this Site. Institutions and entities other than the licensee are specifically not Authorized Users under the terms of the license granted to this licensee.



© 2009 World Book, Inc. All rights reserved. WORLD BOOK and the GLOBE DEVICE are registered trademarks or trademarks of World Book, Inc.