

Axolotl

Ambystoma mexicanum



ANIMAL FACTS



Physical Characteristics

- Physical Description: Axolotls have long bodies and short legs. The gills on the outside of their body appear feathery. They have four toes on the front feet, and five toes on the back feet.
- Coloration: Axolotls can shift their body color lighter or darker to hide themselves in the wild. Pink axolotls are bred by humans.
- Sexual Dimorphism: Males and females are hard to tell apart, but the females have a more rounder head and males have a more slim body.
- Axolotls, like all amphibians, can breathe through their skin. However, they can switch to using their lungs on land and in shallow water!

Size

- Length: 12 inches (30 cm)
- Weight: 10.5 ounces

Lifespan

- Wild: 15 years
- Zoos: 6 years

Behaviors

- Activity Cycle: Nocturnal
- Lifestyle: Aquatic
- Social Structure: Axolotls prefer to be by themselves, they are not social animals. They like to nip at fish, so fish should not be kept with an axolotl.

Diet

- Wild: Worms, tadpoles, insect larva, crustaceans and fish.
- Zoo: A variety of foods to meet their needs; trout or salmon pellets, frozen or live worms, and more!

Reproduction

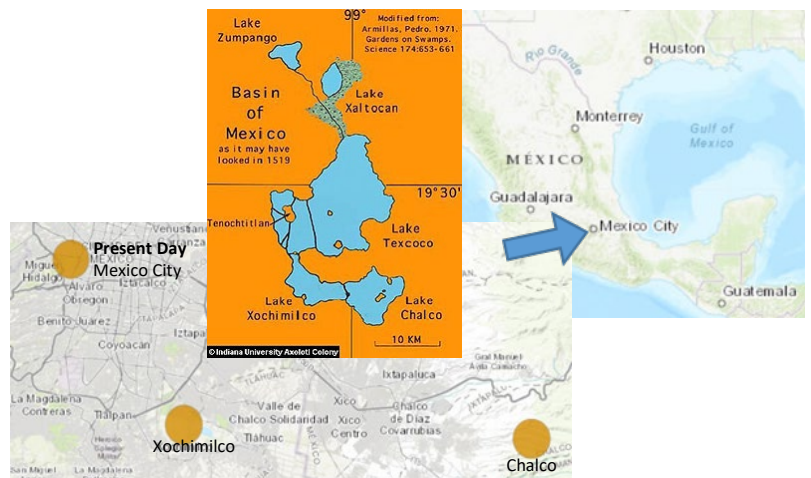
- Incubation: 15 days
- Parenting: Once the eggs are laid, there is no parental care.
- Clutch Size: between 100-1000 eggs laid from one axolotl, although not all may survive.
- Breeding Behaviors: Before breeding, axolotls have a courting dance they will perform.

Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Freshwater lakes and wetlands
- Range: Mexico City, Mexico

Conservation

- IUCN Status: Critically Endangered
- Contributing factors: Habitat loss from the draining of lakes Xochimilco and Chalco is the largest factor. Axolotls were originally from south of Mexico City in Lake Xochimilco and Lake Chalco, but these lakes were drained in the 1970s to prevent flooding. Lake Xochimilco



only survives as a series of canals and lagoons which are polluted. Mexico City was built on top of what was once Tenochtitlan which was an island in Lake Texcoco, which was also drained. As a modern city, all wetland areas around it have been eliminated, leaving little to no habitat for the wild axolotl.

Classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Amphibia
- Order: Urodela
- Family: Ambystomatidae
- Genus: Ambystoma
- Species: *A. mexicanum*

Interesting Facts

- Axolotls can re-grow body parts that get injured, or even cut off! They can re-grow that same limb 5 times.
- Axolotls are one of the only species that are over 1000 times more resistant to cancer than most mammals in the world.
- The feathery branches on the sides of their heads are their gills!