

Eastern Lesser Siren

Siren intermedia



Physical Characteristics

- Sirens have a long slender body and only 2 front legs with four toes on each.
- Gray, black, brown, or olive colored with small black or brown speckling.
- Able to move short distances over land by staying encased in a layer of slime.
- Sirens respond to receding water levels by aestivating (burrowing into the bottom mud). Once burrowed, the mud will dry and harden on the skin. This forms a protective cocoon which prevents the siren from drying out until their habitat refills with water.

Size

- Length: 20 inches

Lifespan

- Zoos: 6 years

Behaviors

- Activity Cycle: Nocturnal and aquatic, preferring slow moving shallow water
- Vocalizations: Communicates with clicks (uncommon for salamanders) when near other sirens and emits a shrill call when startled or attacked by a predator

Diet

- Wild: Crustaceans, snails, worms, insect and amphibian larvae (even their own young)
- Zoo:

Reproduction

- Incubation/Gestation Period: 45-75
- Fledging/Parenting: Fertilized eggs are deposited in shallow, vegetated water and left to hatch
- Clutch/Litter Size: 12-300 eggs with the average being 200
- Breeding Behaviors: Violent mating is assumed from the bite marks and scratches present among adults, but has not been observed.

Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Marshes, ponds, ditches, canals
- Range: Southern and central United States, edging into Northern Mexico

Conservation

- IUCN Status: Least Concern
- Facts: Not threatened due to its large range, but extirpated in several areas due to loss of wetland
- Predators: Water snakes, fish, alligators, and wading birds



Classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Amphibia
- Order: Caudata
- Family: Sirenidae
- Genus: *Siren*
- Species: *S. intermedia*

Interesting Facts

- Sirens feed by vacuuming in their prey and swallowing it whole.
- Sirens can click and even cry out when surprised or attacked.
- These sirens can cocoon themselves in mucous when their environments dry out; the mucous allows them to stay cool and moist.