

*Salamanders*

# Salamanders To Find A Place In The Mud

By DON RIGHETTI  
Sentinel Staff Writer

Salamanders need love, too. The State Division of Highways, at the prodding of Watsonville naturalist Charles Marinovich and a UC professor, is providing it.

The highway people have built a pond in Aptos to insure survival of one of the world's last two breeding places for the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander, an ice-age creature which is one of the world's oldest inhabitants.

Marinovich, who has conducted a lengthy study of the salamanders, learned of plans to drain Valencia Lagoon near Rob Roy Junction in connection with a Route 1 freeway project in Aptos.

The lagoon is one of the vanishing salamander's last two breeding spots, the other being a small pond in La Selva Beach.

Marinovich told of the salamanders' plight to Dr. Robert Stebbins, zoology professor at UC Berkeley. Stebbins took the case to division of highways engineers, and together they worked out a plan for a new breeding pond in the same location that would meet the precise requirements for the salamanders' survival.

The new pond will be ready for the salamanders when they come down from the tree-covered hills in the vicinity to breed in the water after first-of-the-year rains.

Stebbins said the salamanders spend most of their time on land where they live in dark oak woods, low thickets, rotting logs or even underground.

They come to the breeding pond for a short time to lay their eggs during and after the heavy winter rains. The eggs and larvae require three to four months to develop in still, stag-

nant water that must have a constant depth of 18 inches.

The Santa Cruz Long - Toed Salamander is rather a handsome fellow as amphibians go. He grows to be four to six inches long with a slate-colored belly and black back with bright orange spots.

Stebbins said that 10,000 years ago the salamanders probably were widespread when the climate was much cooler and more humid. Fossils confirm the Santa Cruz Salamander truly is one of the earth's oldest creatures.

Today the earth has become much warmer and drier, and the only two suitable breeding spots remaining are those in the mid-county.

Highway maintenance crews under Larry Walker, Santa Cruz maintenance superintendent, now have completed construction of the 50x200-foot pond, and,

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Charles McGill of the State Division of Highways is busy planting native vegetation to nourish young Santa Cruz Long-Toed Sala-

manders and preserve the species, while Photographer Peter Asano records the action. (Photo by Sentinel Chief Photographer Pete Amos)

## Weather

MONTEREY BAY AREA — Low overcast through Friday but some cloudiness clearing. Little temperature change. Highs Friday from near 60 along the ocean to the upper 60s inland. Low tonight in the low 50s. Light winds.

Temperatures for 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. today: High 65, low 52.

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McCallie's letter also asks if ED

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with Dr. Stebbins' assistance, have begun planting it with cattails, spike rushes and other native vegetation on which the young salamanders feed after hatching.

Regarding the efforts to save the salamanders — listed as a rare and endangered species by the U.S. Department of Interior — Stebbins said, "A creature doesn't have to be a whooping crane or as big as a redwood to be preserved."