

Natural History Notes

ANEIDES AENEUS (Green Salamander). Ground-dwelling behavior. Green salamanders (*Aneides aeneus*) are well-known as crevice-dwelling salamanders that primarily inhabit exposed rock faces (and on rare occasions are observed arboreally) in the southeastern United States (Gordon 1952. Am. Midl. Nat. 47: 666–701). These salamanders, with their black and green mottled pattern, tend to blend in well with mossy rock faces and utilize these specialized habitats for nesting and brumation (Niemiller et al. 2022. Herpetol. Conserv. Biol. 17:249–265). Green salamanders are known to inhabit the Walden’s Ridge geologic feature on the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau, including Prentice Cooper State Forest in east Tennessee (PCSF; Niemiller et al. 2022. Herpetol. Conserv. Biol. 17:249–265).

On 17 February 2024 we recorded two green salamanders engaging in abnormal ground-dwelling behavior at PCSF. During surveys for the wetland-breeding four-toed salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*), we flipped two individual green salamanders (one at 1149 h and the other at 1558 h) under logs directly adjacent to two different

ephemeral wetlands at PCSF (exact localities withheld for conservation concerns; Fig. 1). One individual was found under the same cover object as a single adult southern zigzag salamander (Fig. 1; *Plethodon ventralis*). Neither wetland was in the vicinity of any emergent rock formations that are considered typical habitat for this species, but both were found in forested habitat. We believe that this behavior may have been triggered by abnormally rapid drop in temperature from a high of 11.1 °C on 16 February 2024 to –2.2 °C on the morning of 17 February 2024. These salamanders may have both been occupying arboreal habitat and then forced to descend and shelter under substantial cover objects when temperatures rapidly dropped below freezing. These occurrences may suggest that this species may be willing to use a variety of habitats that are not considered suitable (i.e., habitat other than rock crevices and trees).

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Fig. 1. (A) An adult green salamander (*Aneides aeneus*) and an adult southern zigzag salamander (*Plethodon ventralis*) flipped under a small log at Prentice Cooper State Forest. (B) The wetland habitat directly adjacent to the log. Photos by B.S.W. and A.M.M.