

American Toad

Bufo a. americanus

(*synonym: Anaxyrus a. americanus*)

Natural History



Description: American Toads range in color from brown to red with patches of olive or gray. A toad's skin can change color to yellow, brown or black with temperature, stress or humidity. Their bellies are light yellow or white. A toad's skin is covered with warts and American Toads can be distinguished from other toad species by several dark spots on their backs containing only 1-2 warts each. Toads have two large paratoid glands that produce a poisonous milky fluid as protection from predators. Male toads have dark colored throats and are smaller than females. Females have white throats.

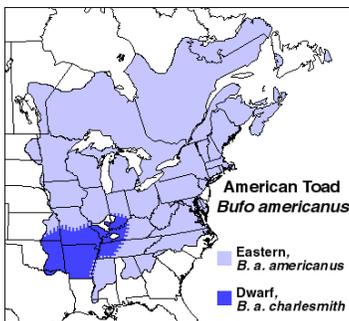
Vocalizations: A loud, long trill that males use to attract mates during the breeding season.

Breeding: Mating typically occurs in March and April when males congregate in shallow water and trill to females. Females choose their mates by the quality of their trill and their ability to defend their territory. The female lays two long strands of 4,000-8,000 jelly-covered eggs which develop into tadpoles in 3-12 days. The eggs mature more quickly in warmer temperatures. Tadpoles metamorphose into toads after 40-70 days. Toads are old enough to breed when they are 2-3 years old.

Distribution: American Toads are found in the eastern United States and Canada.

Habitat: Toads live in a wide range of habitats as long as there is semi-permanent freshwater and patches of vegetation for cover and hunting. They are common in backyard gardens. In the winter toads burrow in the soil, backwards, using their legs to push away the dirt.

Diet: Adult toads are nocturnal, generalist, carnivores, which means they eat a wide variety of insects and other invertebrates that they catch at night. American Toads can actually shoot out their sticky tongues to catch prey, unlike other toads who must wait for their food to approach before they pounce. Toads use their front legs to push larger food items into their mouths. Toads can eat up to 1,000 insects a day!



Lifespan: Toads in the wild only survive for 1-2 years however they may live to be 10 years old. There are accounts of toads living to be 30 years old in captivity. A toad's main predators are snakes, such as the Eastern Hognose Snake.

Conservation Status: American Toads are common throughout their range.

Range Map Reference: USGS
NPWRC website