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American toad

Anaxyrus americanus

The American toad can be found in the eastern half of North America near fresh water sources.

- Toads do not drink water; they absorb it through their skin.
- American toads have glands that produce a poisonous fluid that tastes bad to many predators. The poison is not lethal to humans, but it is important to wash your hands after touching a toad.
- Toads will inflate their lungs and lift their bodies to appear bigger to a potential predator. Their coloring also allows them to blend in with their surroundings and hide.
- American toads hibernate during winter months, burrowing deep into the soil, safely below the frost line.
- Snakes are the primary predator of the American toad, and some are immune to the toad’s poison.
- American toads reproduce in the water during the spring. After emerging from hibernation, males go to a breeding site (shallow, often grassy areas in bodies of water) and begin to call. Females then arrive and lay clusters of eggs – 2,000 to more than 15,000 – in the water.
- Tadpoles hatch in just a few days and metamorphosis occurs in about two months. Adults reach reproductive age in two to four years, depending on the conditions and sex of the toad.

Quick Facts

Length: About 3 inches (7.5 cm)

Appearance: Short, stout bodies and thick brown, brick-red or olive-colored skin covered in warts

Life Expectancy: Less than five years

Diet: Nearly anything they can catch—insects, snails, beetles and slugs

Range: Eastern half of North America

Behavior: Their mating calls can last up to 20 seconds

Immerse yourself in the amazing world of *Amphibians* at Shedd Aquarium’s special exhibit featuring 40 species of salamanders, frogs, toads and worm-like creatures called caecilians. Learn how these fascinating animals reproduce and adapt to survive today’s changing world, and every day actions we can take to protect their future. *Amphibians*, sponsored by Walgreens, runs May 2015 through 2017.

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