

Frogs & Toads

OF MONTANA



Photo by Bryce Maxwell

Rocky Mountain Tailed Frog
(*Ascaphus montanus*)



Photo by Eric Dallalo

Plains Spadefoot
(*Spea bombifrons*)



Photo by Bryce Maxwell

Western Toad
(*Anaxyrus boreas*)



Photo by Lauren J. Livo & Steve Wilcox

Great Plains Toad
(*Anaxyrus cognatus*)



Photo by Lauren J. Livo & Steve Wilcox

Woodhouse's Toad
(*Anaxyrus woodhousii*)



Photo by Lauren J. Livo & Steve Wilcox

Boreal Chorus Frog
(*Pseudacris maculata*)



Photos by Bryce Maxwell

Pacific Treefrog
(*Pseudacris regilla*)



Photo by Lauren J. Livo & Steve Wilcox

Columbia Spotted Frog
(*Rana luteiventris*)



Photo by Lauren J. Livo & Steve Wilcox

Northern Leopard Frog
(*Lithobates pipiens*)



Photo by Kristi DuBois

American Bullfrog
(*Lithobates catesbeianus*)
Not Native to Montana



Great Basin Spadefoot
(*Spea intermontana*)



Photo by Kris Kendall

Canadian Toad
(*Anaxyrus hemiophrys*)



Photo by Kris Kendall

Wood Frog
(*Lithobates sylvaticus*)

Potentially present in Montana but currently undocumented



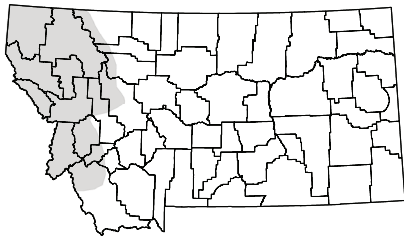
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— discover, preserve, protect —

For more information on all of Montana's native species visit the Montana Field Guide <http://fieldguide.mt.gov>



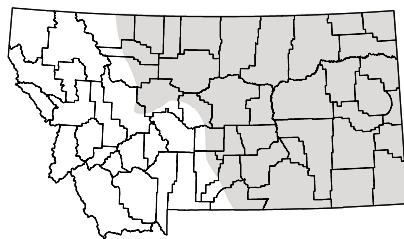
Rocky Mountain Tailed Frog (Ascaphus montanus)

Found in and along small, swift, cold mountain streams west of the Continental Divide and in the front ranges just east of the Continental Divide to elevations of 8720 ft (2658 m). Adult body length 1.2-2.2 inches (31-56 mm). Body color is reddish brown or gray-green with some gray-black mottling; skin texture is distinctly bumpy. Eyes are large with vertical pupils. No external ear drums. Male has a “tail” which is used to fertilize eggs internally within the female. Eggs are laid in the summer, 28-86 at a time, in rosary-like strings attached to the underside of rocks in streams. Eggs hatch in 6-8 weeks. Tadpoles up to 2.5 inches (64 mm) long are black to reddish brown, often with a black spot on the tip of the tail, and have a large mouth modified into a sucker. Tadpoles take 2 to 3 years to metamorphose. Sexual maturity in Montana is attained at 4 or 5 years. Voice: none.



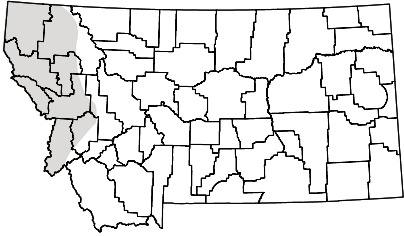
Great Plains Toad (Anaxyrus cognatus)

Found in grassland, sage-steppe, and floodplain habitats across eastern Montana to elevations of 4320 ft (1317 m). Adult body length 2 to 4.5 inches (51-115 mm). The back has large, dark, almost symmetrical spots surrounded by light edges. The belly is cream to white. Skin is dry with small warts. Converging V-shaped cranial crests are present between the eyes, and post-orbital crests (ridges behind the eyes) connect to them at a right angle behind the eyes. The post-orbital crests usually touch the parotoid glands (large glands behind the external ear drums). Adults have two black tubercles on each hind foot that are used to excavate burrows. They spend much of the year underground and emerge nocturnally to feed and breed during warm rains. Normally breed in temporary ponds. Eggs are black above, white below, and encased in scalloped gelatinous strings that are wrapped around vegetation in temporary pools. Tadpoles are black to gray-brown. Eggs hatch in 2 to 3 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 3 to 6 weeks. Voice: A harsh jack hammer-like metallic trill, lasting 5 to 50 or more seconds, almost deafening at close range. Vocal sac sausage-shaped when inflated to 1/3 of body size.



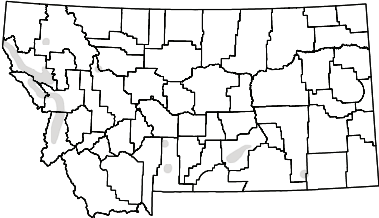
Sierran Treefrog (Pseudacris regilla)

Found in and adjacent to forest cover west of the Continental Divide at elevations up to 5948 (1813 m). Adult body length is 1.3 to 2 inches (32-50 mm). Base color is brown or green with dark spots or stripes on the head, back, and legs and a dark “Y” or triangular spot on the head between the eyes. A dark bold eye line extends from the nostril to the shoulder. Large toe pads are present at the tips of the toes. Breed in temporary, and occasionally permanent, ponds soon after snowmelt with males forming loud breeding choruses at night and sporadically calling during the day. Eggs are tan above, cream below, encased in gelanous capsules, and are laid in small clusters of 10 to 80. Tadpoles are brown/bronze with eyes located on the sides of the head. Eggs hatch in 2 to 3 weeks and tadpoles metamorphose in 8 to 12 weeks. Voice: High pitched “ribbit” or “kreck-ek”. Vocal sac round.



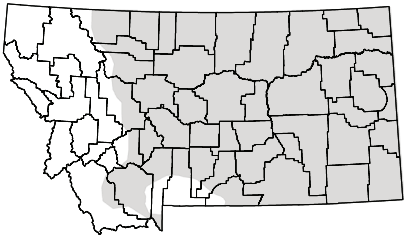
American Bullfrog (Lithobates catesbeianus)

NOT NATIVE TO MONTANA. Introduced widely at lower elevations across Montana with self sustaining populations broadly established on the Bitterroot River valley below Hamilton, the Clark Fork River valley below Missoula, the lower Flathead River below the National Bison Range, and the Yellowstone River valley between Laurel and Pompey’s Pillar. Found around permanent waters and rarely found far from the water’s edge. Adult body length may reach 6 inches (152 mm). Adults are usually pale to dark green or brownish green with darker spots or blotches above; the underside is cream to yellowish with gray to green mottling. Dark green bands are often found on the legs. Prominent ridges run from the eyes over the top of the external ear drum to the shoulders. Breed in shallower warmer portions of permanent waters in June and July. Eggs are black above, white below, and are laid in a thin film in masses several feet across containing 3,000-48,000. Tadpoles can grow to lengths of 6 inches (152) are olive green with numerous black spots above, and are cream to yellow below. Eggs hatch in 2-5 days and tadpoles overwinter and metamorphose toward the end of their second summer. Voice: A deep bellow suggesting “brrrrruuummm” can be heard from a considerable distance. Frightened individuals may give a “puft” or “eep” as they jump into the water.



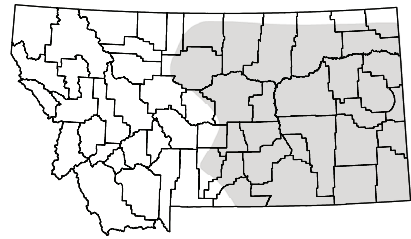
Plains Spadefoot (Spea bombifrons)

Found in grassland and sage-steppe habitats with sandy or loose soils across eastern Montana and in valley bottoms of the upper Missouri drainages to elevations of 6608 ft (2014 m). Adult body length 1.5-2.4 inches (38-60 mm). Color above is brown to dull green, often with flecks of orange and 4 lighter stripes with the inner two creating an hourglass shape. Color below is whitish. Adults have a high and hard lump or “boss” between the eyes, single tubercles on each hind foot, and a vertical eye pupil. Oval egg masses of 10 to 250 eggs are attached to underwater plants or debris. Tadpoles have a small sucker-like mouth and are mottled sooty to olive/yellow above, paler below, with gold metallic flecking overall; the iris is gold. They dig their own burrows and may remain underground for a year or more during drought. Primarily nocturnal and emerge from their burrows only following heavy rains. Breed in shallow, temporary pools. Eggs hatch after 2 to 6 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 3 to 6 weeks. Voice: A loud short, rasping, nasal snore which lasts about a second, is repeated for extended periods, and can be heard for up to a mile. Vocal sac round.



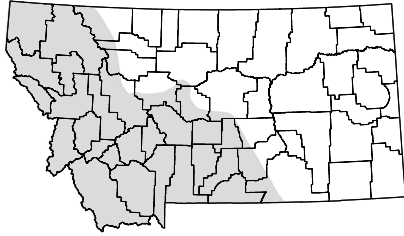
Woodhouse’s Toad (Anaxyrus woodhousii)

Found in grassland, sage-steppe, pine savannah and floodplain habitats across eastern Montana to elevations of 4426 ft (1349 m). Adult body length is 2.2 to 4.6 inches (56-118 mm). Base color is gray, brown, or greenish with paler mottling or spots and a prominent white or yellowish line down the center of the back. Skin dry with small warts. Parallel cranial crests are present between the eyes and post-orbital crests connect to them at a right angle behind the eyes, the post-orbital crests typically touch the parotoid glands. Adults have two black tubercles on each hind foot that are used to excavate burrows. Breed in permanent lakes, ponds, reservoirs and slow streams where they prefer shallow areas with mud bottoms. Eggs are black above, white below, and are encased in long gelatinous strings that are often wrapped around vegetation. Tadpoles are dark gray or brown with gold flecking. Eggs hatch in 2 to 4 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 4 to 7 weeks. Voice: A nasal mournful w-a-a-a-a-h, lasting 2 to 10 seconds and repeated regularly or irregularly. Vocal sac round.



Columbia Spotted Frog (Rana luteiventris)

Found in or near waters in a variety of habitats in the mountainous portion of western Montana at elevations up to 9800 ft (2987 m). Adult body length 1.8 to 3.9 inches (45-100 mm). Color olive to brown with variable numbers of dark spots (usually with lighter centers) on the back, sides, and legs. Back and sides often covered with small bumps. The undersides of the legs are often red, salmon, or orange fading into a cream colored chin, chest, and belly. Breeding takes place in permanent and temporary lakes, ponds, and backwaters. Eggs are black above, white below, and are deposited on sedges communally near the water margin in with individual globular masses containing 200 to 2,400 eggs. Tadpoles reach lengths of up to 3.5 inches (90 mm), are olive brown with large gold and black flecks above and iridescent bronze below; eyes are located on the top of the head. Eggs hatch in 5 to 21 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 8 to 16 weeks. Voice: A series of faint low-pitched clicks, imitated by clicking your tongue against the roof of your mouth, given above or below water. No vocal sacs.



Great Basin Spadefoot (Spea intermontana)

NOT DOCUMENTED IN MONTANA, but may possibly be present in Beaverhead or Madison counties. Similar in appearance and habitat use to the Plains Spadefoot. Reliably distinguished from the Plains Spadefoot by the presence of a soft glandular lump or “boss” between the eyes and a faster and higher pitched snore-like breeding call.

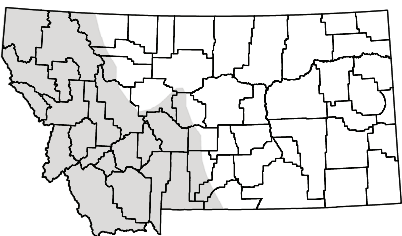


Canadian Toad (Anaxyrus hemiophrys)

NOT DOCUMENTED IN MONTANA, but may be found in or near wetlands in the far northeastern corner of the state in Sheridan, Daniels, or Roosevelt counties. Eggs, larvae, and juveniles are similar to Great Plains Toads and Woodhouse’s Toads. However, adults may be distinguished from these species by the lack of post-orbital cranial crests behind the eyes. Breeding calls are similar to the Woodhouse’s Toad, but are of a higher pitch with a less mournful quality. Vocal sac is round and similar to Woodhouse’s Toad.

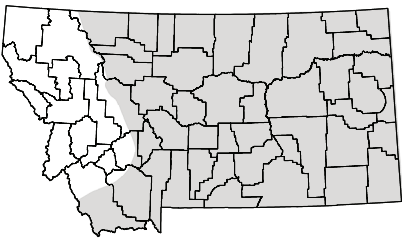
Western Toad (Anaxyrus boreas)

Found in a variety of habitats from valley bottoms to high elevations across the western mountainous portion of the state at elevations up to 9232 ft (2814 m). Adult body length is 2.4 to 4.7 inches (60-120 mm). Body color is brown, dusky, gray, or greenish above with a prominent white to yellowish line down the center of the back. Skin is dry and has many warts set in dark blotches often tinged with rust. Lacks ridges or cranial crests running between the eyes. Pupils are horizontal. Adults have two black tubercles on each hind foot. Breeding and egg laying usually takes place 1 to 3 months after snowmelt. Eggs are black above, cream below, and laid in long, clear, double strings wrapped around vegetation in warmer portions of lakes, ponds and slow streams. Tadpoles are typically jet black, but are sometimes creamy tan. Eggs hatch in 7-14 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 6 to 13 weeks. Voice: a faint chirruping, suggesting the peeping of a chick. No vocal sac.



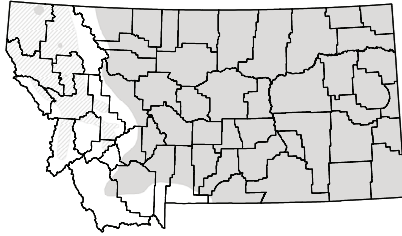
Boreal Chorus Frog (Pseudacris maculata)

Found in grassland, sage-steppe, pine savannah and floodplain habitats across eastern and southwest Montana to elevations of 9324 ft (2842 m). Adult body length is 0.7 to 1.6 inches (18-40 mm). Background color varies from green, to brownish-gray or even reddish. A dark broken or solid line extends from the snout through the eye to the groin and three stripes or lines of spots run down the back onto the legs. Adults have small indistinct toe pads. Breed in temporary ponds and small lakes after spring and summer rains. Eggs are brown to black above, cream below, encased in a gelatinous capsule, and laid in clusters of 5-75 eggs attached to submerged vegetation. Tadpoles are olive to brown/bronze with eyes located on the sides of the head. Eggs hatch in 5 to 27 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 6 to 10 weeks. Voice: call is a slow cricket-like trill, similar to the sound produced by running your finger over the finer teeth of a comb, increasing in frequency throughout the call. Vocal sac round.



Northern Leopard Frog (Lithobates pipiens)

Nearly extirpated across historic range in the valley bottoms west of the Continental Divide. Found in and near riparian areas, and occasionally more isolated water bodies, across eastern Montana and in valley bottoms of the upper Missouri drainages to elevations of 6234 ft(1900 m). Adult body length is 2.1 to 4.2 inches (55-107 mm). Base color brown or green with large, dark spots surrounded by light-colored halos. Dorsolateral folds (ridges along the sides of the back) are usually lighter in color than the surrounding background. Underside creamy white. Breed in permanent to semi-permanent waters soon after snow melt. Eggs are black or brown above, white below, and are laid in densely vegetated areas attached to vegetation in 3 to 5 inch globular masses composed of 650 to 6200 eggs. Tadpoles are dark green to brown with gold or silver metallic flecking above and cream white below. Eggs hatch in 5 to 20 days and tadpoles metamorphose in 8 to 15 weeks. Voice: A low chortling sequence lasting 2-3 seconds; imitated by rubbing a well inflated rubber balloon. Individuals may squawk when they jump into the water and may scream when caught. Paired vocal sacs expand over the forelimbs.



Wood Frog (Lithobates sylvaticus)

NOT DOCUMENTED IN MONTANA, but may occur in the Bighorn Mountains of Bighorn County or the Purcell Mountains in Lincoln County. Adults may be distinguished from Columbia Spotted Frog adults by the presence of a broad black mask extending from the tip of the snout, through the eye, to the base of the forelimb and the lack of salmon coloring on the underside. Breeding calls resembling the quacking of a small duck and paired vocal sacs, one over each forelimb, also distinguish adults from other species.

