



THE SLIPPERY (AND SCALY) SIDE OF FORT COLLINS

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES IN OUR BACKYARD



City of
Fort Collins
Natural
Areas Program

naturally yours

WHAT ARE THESE?

AMPHIBIANS

- Ectothermic
- Skin is moist and may act as respiratory organ
- Examples: Frogs, Toads, Salamanders

REPTILES

- Ectothermic
- Skin is scaly and dry
- Examples: Snakes, Lizards, Turtles

AMPHIBIANS ARE IN DECLINE

- Predation
- Competition
- Disease
- Habitat loss
- Over-collection
- Pesticides



→ Worldwide decline of amphibians

AMPHIBIANS

- Salamanders
 - Smooth skin
 - Adults have tail
 - No claws on toes (lizards have claws)
 - Can forego metamorphosis (neotony)
- Frogs
 - Smooth skin
 - Adults lack tail
 - Typically in or near water
 - Larval stage → adult
- Toads
 - Skin often bumpy or warty
 - Adults lack tail
 - Breed in water, but otherwise also found in uplands
 - Larval stage → adult

TIGER SALAMANDER (*AMBYSTOMA TIGRINUM*)

- Identification
 - Skin smooth, moist
 - Long tail
 - Color pattern
- Only one species of salamander in Colorado
- Common around Fort Collins
 - Most likely to see on damp nights



WESTERN CHORUS FROG

(*Pseudacris Triseriata/ Maculata*)

- Identification
 - Body size less than 1.5 inches
 - Strip though eye (snout to groin)
 - Three stripes on back
- Call
 - Sounds like running your finger over the teeth of a comb
- Common in Fort Collins



WOODHOUSE'S TOAD

(Bufo woodhousii)

- Identification
 - Light stripe along back
 - Cranial crests
 - No belly spotting
 - Below 7,000' elevation
- Call
 - Crying baby
 - Horror movie scream/ wail
- Common in Fort Collins



BULLFROG

(Rana catesbeiana)

- Identification
 - Large body size
 - Fold of skin around top or eardrum
- Call
 - Deep pitched bellow
 - Jug-o-rum
- Breeds almost anywhere!



WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT BULLFROGS?

- Invasive species
- Preys on native amphibians
- May spread diseases (e.g., chytrid fungus)



Wendy Studinski

CHYTRID FUNGUS

- *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd)
- Fungus that infects amphibians worldwide
- Causes fatal disease (often majority of population)
- Persists in environment after host leaves
- Some species are resistant (bullfrogs)



NORTHERN LEOPARD FROG

(Rana pipiens)

- Identification
 - Green or brownish color with dark spots on body
 - Dorsolateral folds: conspicuous and extend from eye to groin
- Call
 - Accelerating rattle, chuckling, grunting, grating
- Rare along Front Range
 - Historically widespread in our area
- Petitioned for federal listing under ESA



Aran Meyer

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Decontamination (clean gear with 10% chlorine solution)
- Education
- Don't turn them loose!
- Catch bullfrogs (with fishing license)
- Join monitoring efforts



NAP

REPTILES

- Snakes
 - Move by slithering; rhythmic contractions of muscular bodies
 - Some snakes are good swimmers!
- Turtles
 - Shell is made of hardened skin tissue
- Lizards
 - Often use quick escape as defense but also cryptic coloration to hide

WESTERN/PRAIRIE RATTLESNAKE (*Crotalus viridis*)

- Identification
 - Horny rattle on end of tail
 - Numerous small scales on top of head
 - Color variable
- Venomous!
- Diverse habitat
 - Grasslands, shrublands, riparian areas, deserts



Bob Babs

WESTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE

(Heterodon nasicus)

- Identification
 - No longitudinal stripes
 - Keeled scales (“rough” appearance, not smooth)
 - Nose distinctly upturned
- Notorious for playing dead
- Habitat
 - Grasslands
 - Along streamsides, irrigation ditches, ponds



CDOW



NAP

BULLSNAKE/ GOPHER SNAKE (*Pituophis catenifer*)

- Identification
 - Similar to hog-nosed snake
 - Nose not distinctly upturned
- Diverse habitat



GARTER SNAKES

- Plains garter snake
(*Thamnophis radix*)
 - Black bars at edge of scales on upper lips
 - Primarily below 6,000' elevation
- Western terrestrial garter snake
(*Thamnophis elegans*)
 - No black bars
 - Up to 11,000' elevation
- Common garter snake
(*Thamnophis sirtalis*)
 - No black bars
 - Red color on side
 - More restricted to riparian areas than other two species
 - Lower elevations, but widely distributed along Front Range



SNAPPING TURTLE

(Chelydra serpentina)

- Identification
 - Carapace (top shell) has saw-toothed rear margin
 - Plastron (bottom shell) small and without hinge
- Habitat: Streams, ponds
 - Often seen sunning on logs
 - North Shields Pond is a good place to observe!
- Strong jaws



PAINTED TURTLE

(*Chrysemys picta*)

- Identification
 - Carapace (top shell) green
 - Plastron (bottom shell) orange or red
 - Head with yellow streaks
- Permanent ponds, slow moving streams
- Love to bask!



PAINTED TURTLE VS RED EARED SLIDER

- Native Species
- Non-native (eastern U.S. species)
- Widely sold in pet trade



SHORT-HORNED LIZARD

(Phrynosoma hernandesi)

- Identification
 - Body wide and flat
 - Short horn-like spines on back of head
 - Row of fringe scales on side of body
- Habitat
 - Shortgrass prairie, semi-desert
 - See at Soapstone Prairie, foothills sites, etc.

