

THE SLIPPERY (AND SCALY) SIDE OF FORT COLLINS

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES IN OUR BACKYARD



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



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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 DOZ

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





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



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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



BULLSNAKE/ GOPHER SNAKE (Pituophis catenifer)

- Identification
 - Similar to hognosed snake
 - Nose not distinctly upturned
- Diverse habitat





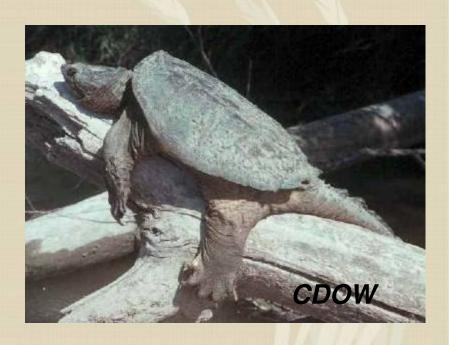
GARTER SNAKES

- 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





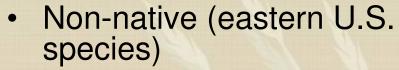
PAINTED TURTLE (Chrysemys picta)

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



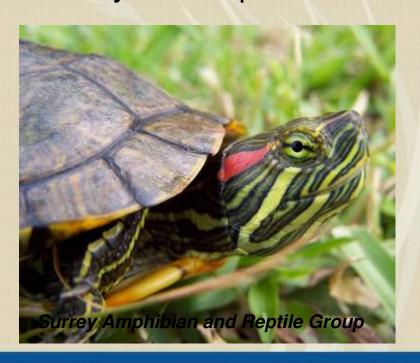
PAINTED TURTLE VS RED EARED SLIDER

Native Species



Widely sold in pet trade







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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, semidesert
- See at Soapstone Prairie, foothills sites, etc.



