



Photos by Joshua Ream

### TAXONOMY

Three nominal subspecies are generally recognized, one of which occurs in Alaska. Geographic variation within this species is poorly studied.

The Boreal Toad is squat and chunky, with short legs, numerous warts, and dominant paratoid glands at the back of the head. It can vary in color from brown, green or gray above, and white with dark mottling below. There is a conspicuous light-colored strip running down the middle of the back. The hind feet have two large, rubbery knobs on the heel for digging. During breeding, males may emit a soft, birdlike clucking call in response to other males.

Boreal Toads can measure up to 12.5 cm (5 in.) Snout Vent Length (SVL). Six toads from the mainland of Southeast Alaska averaged 7.0 (6.1-9.0) cm SVL. Females are usually larger, more blotched, and rougher skinned than males.

(Information cited: [www.alaskaherps.info](http://www.alaskaherps.info) / S. O. MacDonald)



Photo by Elke Wind

### ALASKA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Alaska Herpetological Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of Herpetology in the State of Alaska. Our mission is to promote sound research and management of amphibians and reptiles in the North and to provide opportunities in outreach, education, and citizen science for individuals who are interested in these species.

#### WEB:

[WWW.AKHERPSOCIETY.ORG](http://WWW.AKHERPSOCIETY.ORG)

#### FACEBOOK:

ALASKA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

# BOREAL TOAD

*Anaxyrus boreas*



Photo by Joshua Ream

### INFORMATION

This information on the Boreal Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) has been provided by the Alaska Herpetological Society.

You can help locate this species on our website, via a voucher or via the epicollect app. See [www.akherpsociety.org](http://www.akherpsociety.org) for more information.

# Boreal Toad Information

## ADULT

Adults are 6-12.5cm (2.5-5in) long from snout to vent. They have many warts; usually gray, brown or green; a noticeable paratoid glands (bumps behind eyes) and usually have a conspicuous white stripe down the middle of their back (not present or as conspicuous in recently morphed young). The thumb base in males is dark and enlarged.

## TADPOLE

Tadpoles are dark brown. They hatch in about 10 days, and swarm in dense groups (sometimes numbering in the millions) in the warmest and most shallow waters they can find.

## EGGS

Unlike Frogs, female Toads lay strands of up to 12,000 eggs in singles file; multiple females may lay overlapping strands of eggs. They are frequently wrapped around vegetation and in shallow water.

## FACTS

This animal is found in grasslands and woodlands near freshwater (breeds in ponds, lakes, streams, rainy pools); most often in open areas. Found in coastal forests.

These toads are terrestrial as adults and can be found in a wide range of elevations. The Boreal Toad is often referred to as the Western Toad but is distinguished by its northern range.

The toads eat worms, slugs and insects, but will also eat larger animals when possible.

The "Paratoid Glands" behind the eyes, in conjunction with the warts on their backs, secrete a bitter toxin that repels most attackers.

Boreal Toad populations seem to be on the decline in many locations they are found. The reasons at this time are unknown, as some of these areas are pristine environments.



Photo by Elke Wind

## HANDLING AMPHIBIANS

It is actually illegal in the State of Alaska to handle or remove Native amphibians from their habitat without a scientific collection permit.

Handling them can increase the spread of disease and allows deadly chemicals like bug spray and sunscreen to easily penetrate their permeable skin. Removing them can hurt populations and change their genetic structure. Never move amphibians from place to place.

When possible, scrub boots, waders, nets and other equipment with a 5% bleach solution between sites or when you return home. This helps to stop the spread of diseases like chytrid fungus which has been identified in Alaska and can cause mass amphibian mortality.

Also, never release a pet amphibian into the wild!



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## DID YOU KNOW...

*The Boreal Toad is depicted as the traditional crest of the Kiks.adi clan of the Stikine Tlingit? This is evidenced by the large bulky size, dots or splotches depicting warts and often a distinctive white solid or spotted line down the center of the back. They are found on blankets, totems, house poles, bowls, spoons, drums, hats, staffs and halibut hooks!*