



Yosemite Toad *Anaxyrus canorus*



CLASSIFICATION

Threatened—April 2014

DESCRIPTION

The Yosemite toad is a medium-sized toad, usually 1.2 to 2.8 inches in length, found in wet meadows and forests at high elevations. It tends to be most active in the daytime, usually in sunny areas.

While the male toads are smaller and one solid color, yellow-green to a darker greenish-brown, females have black spots or splotches edged with white or cream, set against a grey, tan or brown color.

Yosemite toads have the largest size difference between males and females of any other North American frog or toad.

Both male and female toads have a rough “warty” skin, and a stocky, thick look, and have a stripe down the middle of their back that fades, and at times disappears, with age. They both also have slightly oval glands on each side of their head that produce a poison to help protect them from predators. The iris of their eyes is dark brown with gold reflective cells.

Yosemite toads are slow moving, usually using a walking or crawling

motion as well as short hops. Their activity period tends to be short, anytime from about April-July (depending on snow melt) to late September or early October.

Part of the species name, the word *canorus* means “tuneful” in Latin, referring to the male’s sustained melodious trill, which attracts mates during the early spring breeding season.

Adults are thought to be long-lived, and this factor allows for persistence in variable conditions and more marginal habitats where only periodic good years allow high reproductive success.

Females have been documented to reach 15 years of age, and males as many as 12 years; however, the average longevity of the Yosemite toad in the wild is not known. Females begin breeding at ages 4 to 6, while males begin breeding at ages 3 to 5.

The majority of their life is spent in the upland habitats proximate to their breeding meadows. They use rodent burrows for overwintering as well as spaces under surface objects, including logs and rocks, for temporary refuge.

Males and females also likely inhabit different areas and habitats when not breeding, and females tend to move farther from breeding ponds than males.

DISTRIBUTION

The Yosemite toad is found in wet meadows and forests, at elevations of 4,800 to 12,000 ft. Indigenous to California, they are found in a 150 mile span of the Sierra Nevada

Mountains from Ebbetts Pass in Alpine County in the north to Fresno and northern Inyo Counties in the south.

Once abundant, this species has been in dramatic decline for several decades and is now found primarily on publicly managed lands at high elevations, including streams, lakes, ponds, and meadow habitats located within national forests and national parks.

THREATS

Studies show that the Yosemite toad has seen range-wide declines estimated at almost 50 percent.

Threats include destruction, modification, and curtailment of the species’ habitat and range. Past land uses have altered meadow communities by permanently reducing habitat quantity and quality unless active and costly restoration is implemented.

Climate change is a current threat of high magnitude.

CRITICAL HABITAT:

Designated—2016

RECOVERY PLAN:

None