WILD CANDIDATES "85"

It's Your Choice!

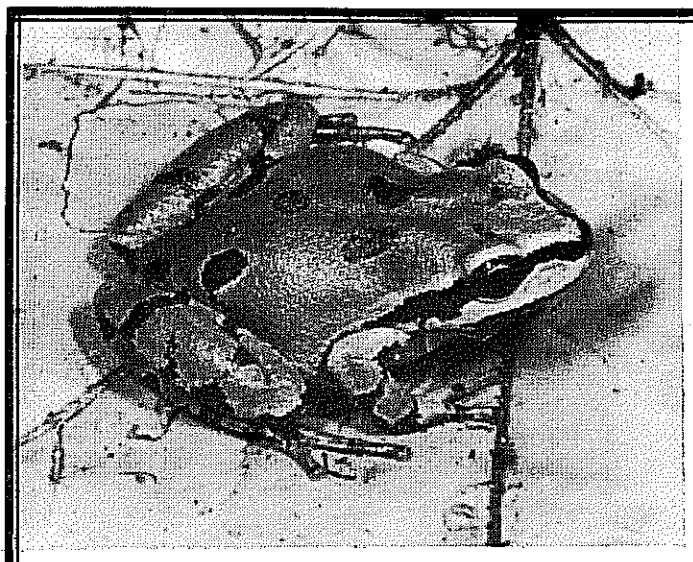

Photo By: C. Schwalbe

Arizona Tree Frog - *(Hyla eximia)*

The Arizona tree frog can be identified as a tree frog by the pads on the toes. This small frog (3/4 to 2 inches long) is most commonly green but can be gold to bronze with a dark stripe from the snout through the eyes and along the sides. Occasionally the back may be spotted or barred. Both sexes are whitish underneath. Males have a tan or greenish throat. The scientific name, *Hyla eximia*, comes from Hylas, a figure in Greek mythology, and *eximia*, Latin for uncommon.

The Arizona tree frog ranges in the mountains of central Arizona and western New Mexico along the Mogollon Rim. Isolated populations can be found in the Huachuca Mountain in Cochise County. This frog prefers meadows and shallow grassy pools in oak, pine and fir forest above 5,000 feet elevation. Individuals can occasionally be found in trees.

Like many of our amphibians, Arizona tree frogs spend most of the year in hibernation, under rocks or logs in the forest, emerging to breed and feed during the summer. Breeding takes place in June to August, triggered by the summer rains. The breeding call of the male is a low pitched clacking sound with one to fifteen or more notes often given in succession. Sometimes calling can be initiated by the sound of people talking. Like all of the frogs and toads in Arizona, these tree frogs are primarily nocturnal although males may call during cloudy, rainy days.

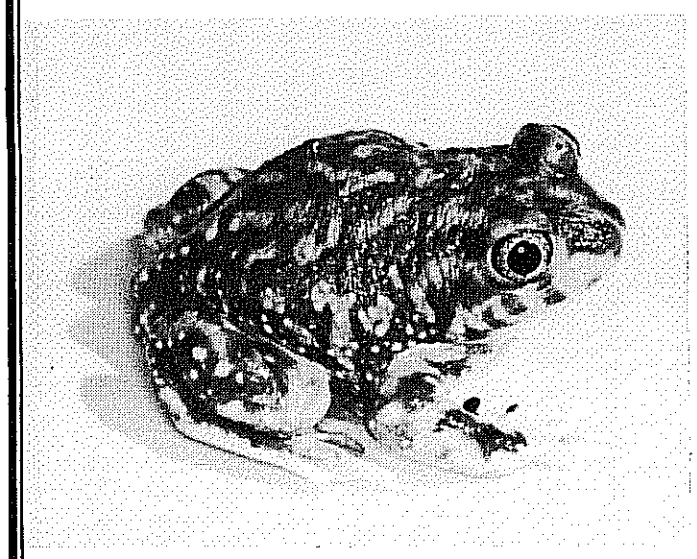

Photo By: M. J. Funquette

Desert Spadefoot Toad - *(Scaphiopus couchi)*

One of Arizona's successful desert residents, the desert spadefoot can be recognized by its call as well as its color pattern. It is also called Couch's spadefoot, which is the translation of the scientific name, *Scaphiopus couchi*. D. N. Couch collected the first specimen known to science. Actually in a separate family, spadefoots are similar to true toads with a warty skin and squatty body. Desert spadefoots are 2 to 3-1/2 inches long, brownish-yellow (females) or greenish-yellow (males) with a darker network of irregular blotches. Both sexes are whitish underneath except for the males' darker throat.

Desert spadefoots are found over most of the southern one-third of Arizona and south to central Mexico. They are found in arid habitats from creosote desert into grasslands in Arizona and into the thornforest in Mexico.

In the fall, spadefoots dig into damp soil and the next seven or eight months are spent hibernating underground. Awakened by the summer rains in July, the desert spadefoots emerge and congregate in large breeding groups in temporary ponds. Some of these choruses of calling male spadefoots can be heard nearly a mile away.

The desert spadefoot's ability to develop from an egg to a tiny toadlet in as little as two weeks is the primary reason this amphibian has been so successful in the arid Southwest. Spade-foot toads will eat almost anything they can get into their mouths, feeding extensively on insects and their larvae.

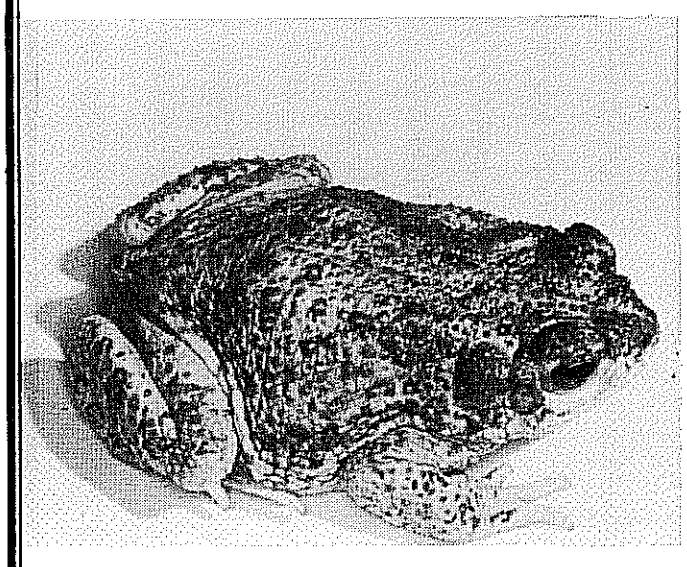

Photo By: M. J. Funquette

Red Spotted Toad - *(Bufo punctatus)*

Small by toad standards (3 inches long, maximum), Red Spotted Toads may be olive to grayish brown. These toads can be distinguished by their flattened head, the small, round parotoid glands just behind the eye and the numerous red or orange warts on the back. The scientific name, *Bufo punctatus*, means red spotted toad in Latin. The dusky throat of the male differs from the white throat of the female. The undersides are light with or without spotting.

The most widespread amphibian in Arizona, Red Spotted Toads are found in suitable habitats throughout the state. They range north into southern Utah, east to central Texas, west almost to San Diego and south to the tip of Baja California and into central mainland Mexico. They are found in a variety of habitats from washes and oases in creosote desertscrub and grasslands up into pine oak woodland below 6500 feet and into the thornscrub and thornforest of Mexico. Most commonly associated with rocks, this toad has a flattened head which enables it to seek shelter beneath rocks and it can occasionally be found under rocks surprisingly far from water.

Breeding occurs from April until September and is initiated by rainfall. The call is a distinctive, continuous trill often lasting 6 to 10 seconds. This musical call can be heard from springs, temporary pools, reservoirs or irrigation ditches. This is the only toad in North America that lays its eggs singly or in short strings instead of long strings.

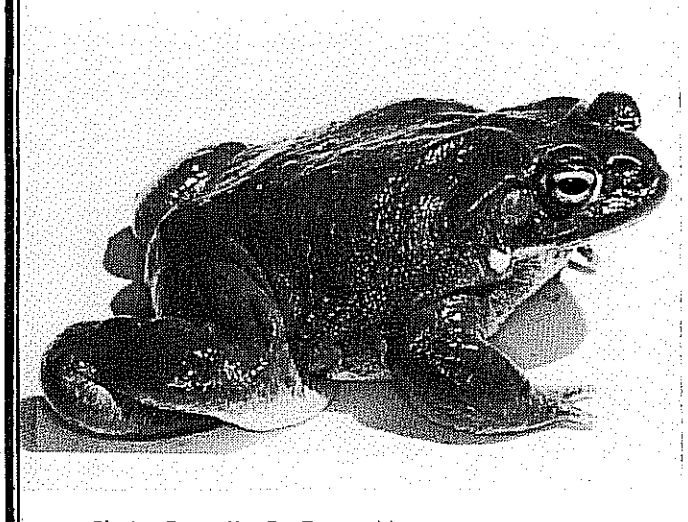

Photo By: M. J. Funquette

Colorado River Toad - *(Bufo alvarius)*

The largest of Arizona's toads, the Colorado River toad can be seven inches long and weigh up to a pound. It is olive to dark brown in color; young toads may have small red spots. Compared to some toads, the skin is relatively smooth with large warts on the hind legs and a distinctive whitish wart behind the angle of the jaw. The scientific name, *Bufo alvarius*, comes from the Latin *bufo*, meaning toad, and *alvarius* meaning of the belly or womb; the intended reference is not clear.

Distributed over the southern one-third of Arizona and extending south into Sinaloa, Mexico, the Colorado River Toad occurs in the extreme southwestern corner of New Mexico and the southeastern corner of California and northeastern portion of Baja California. Found in lowland habitats from creosote desertscrub into grassland and occasionally oak woodlands in Arizona, this toad ranges into thornscrub and thornforest in Mexico.

This large toad breeds from May to July in permanent or semi-permanent ponds but may occasionally be found miles from water. Active at night, this toad may forage in the desert before its breeding pools have filled with rain. Compared to the clamorous calling of the smaller spadefoots and other desert toads, this large toad has a surprisingly weak call. Not fussy eaters, Colorado River toads feed on almost anything they can get into their mouths including insects, spiders, lizards, other toads and even small snakes.

Brief History of the State Symbols Adoptions

In 1985, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission ran an "Arizona Wildlife Awareness" program. Part of this program involved thousands of schoolchildren from around the state voting for an official state mammal, reptile, fish and amphibian.

Students studied 800 species in an effort to determine the best choice, and four finalists were chosen for each category. For example, in the amphibian category, the choice was limited to the Arizona treefrog, the Colorado River toad, the red spotted toad and the spadefoot toad. Eventually, information flyers were developed, similar to the one attached, which gave information about each of the choices.

Students were then allowed to vote for their favorite. The table below shows the results of each of these votes.

Amphibian	**Votes**	**Mammal**	**Votes**
Arizona Treefrog	11,622	Ringtail	9,627
Colorado River Toad	8,520	Whitetail Deer	8,963
Red Spotted Toad	6,346	Desert Bighorn Sheep	5,680
Spadefoot Toad	3,486	Javelina	3,524
Fish	**Votes**	**Reptile**	**Votes**
Arizona Trout	17,213	Arizona Ridgenosed Rattlesnake	9,456
Colorado River Squawfish	8,404	Gila Monster	7,837
Desert Pupfish	5,751	Desert Tortoise	6,457
Bonytail Chub	3,049	Regal Horned Lizard	4,855

Representative Larry Hawke introduced the winners to the Arizona State Legislature for approval. On August 13, 1986, the Arizona treefrog, ringtail, Arizona ridgenosed rattlesnake and Arizona trout (later renamed the Apache trout) joined the cactus wren, saguaro blossom, and palo verde as official state symbols of Arizona.

Below is an excerpt from the Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 41, Article 5, Section 41-859, which made the decision official.

TITLE 41. STATE GOVERNMENT.
ARTICLE 5. STATE EMBLEMS.
SECTION 41-859. STATE ANIMALS

41-859. State animals. The ringtail or bassariscus astutus, the Arizona ridgenosed rattlesnake or crotalus willardi, the Arizona trout or salmo apache and the Arizona treefrog or hyla eximia shall be known respectively as the state mammal, reptile, fish and amphibian.

Information was provided by http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/amphibians/az_tree_frog.htm, http://www.geobop.com/world/NA/US/AZ/Mammal.htm, http://www.geobop.com/world/NA/US/AZ/Fish.htm, and http://www.geobop.com/world/NA/US/AZ/Reptile.htm

Pictures courtesy of the Arizona Game and Fish Department