

**Great Plains Toad (*Bufo cognatus*)**

**Status: NSS4; NatureServe: G5 S3**

**Abundance:** Uncommon

**Introduction:** The Great plains toad is medium sized toad, reaching four and one half inches in adult length. It is distinguished from other toads in Wyoming by its cranial crests, which join together at the tip of its snout in a V shape, and its color pattern. Great Plains toads dig their own burrows and spend the winter in them. The diet of the adult Great Plains toad consists of moths, caterpillars, cutworms, flies, beetles and other small insects. They breed in ponds created by heavy spring or early summer rains. Stock tanks and temporary ponds are believed to be preferred breeding habitats, although slow moving streams and backwaters may also be used. Great Plains toads breed from March to September. The female lays eggs in long gelatinous strings on the pond bottom, which are not attached to vegetation. Eggs hatch in two to three days and tadpoles begin metamorphosis at about 45 days.

**Habitat:** The Great Plains toad lives in the grasslands, sand hills and agricultural areas below 6,000 feet in elevation. It ranges from Canada to Texas and Mexico, and west through New Mexico to Arizona, Utah, Nevada and California. In Wyoming, it has not been found west of the Continental Divide. This species probably inhabits most of the northeastern counties and has been found near Gillette and Newcastle.

**Problems:** A variety of actions have the potential to impact populations of Great Plains toads by fragmenting habitats, altering vernal ponds, eliminating migration corridors, and altering foraging grounds. Natural habitat changes and other factors may also adversely affect this species, but lack of data precludes identification of specific problems and development of management recommendations. Population status, distribution and habitat data are lacking for this species.

**Conservation Actions:**

- Survey and monitor populations;
- Distribution status and habitat trends;
- Research critical life history and habitat information needs; and
- Develop management recommendations based on resulting data.

**References and Additional Reading:**

Baxter, G.T., and M. D. Stone. 1980. Amphibians and reptiles of Wyoming. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne. 137pp.

NatureServe. 2003. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 1.8. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

Stebbins, R. C. 1985. A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, New York. 338 pp.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2004. Atlas of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians in Wyoming. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne. 206pp.

### Great Plains Toad Distribution

