



Cheyenne Mountain Zoological Society

4250 Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Road | Colorado Springs, CO | 80906
(719) 633-9925 | info@cmzoo.org

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Wyoming Toad Recovery Program

For several years Cheyenne Mountain Zoo has assisted with the Species Recovery Program of one of the most endangered amphibians in the world, the Wyoming toad.

Background

Wyoming toads were once abundant in Wyoming's wetlands. The populations drastically declined in the 1970s, and they were listed as federally endangered in 1984, at which time they were feared to be extinct. Biologists and experts in the field believe that the toad's decline is caused by many factors including pollution from pesticide runoff, habitat destruction, fungal disease and acid rain.

In 1987, a breeding population was discovered on a rancher's land at Mortenson Lake, Wyoming. But that population was also in decline, and in 1994, Wyoming toads went extinct in the wild. Only a captive population remained. Captive breeding had been initiated previously, and in 1996, a cooperative Species Survival Plan was officially formed between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept. and the AZA.

Currently, only nine zoo or government facilities participate in captive breeding of Wyoming toads, producing tadpoles and toadlets for reintroduction to the wild.

Our Program

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo has maintained Wyoming toads and has been involved with the Wyoming Toad Recovery Program for many years. However, our toads were not of breeding age until 2004, which was the first year we attempted to breed our resident toads.

The Zoo's staff veterinarian spearheads the complex endeavor that involves multiple hormone injections, photoperiod adjustments, even assisting in the mating process. We must also carefully monitor water quality and the egg through tadpole and toadlet metamorphosis. We were thrilled with the extraordinary results: More than 1,000 tadpoles came from just two breeding pair.



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Just five toadlets have been kept at the Zoo's Amphibian Propagation Center to be raised for future breeding, while the remaining tadpoles were released into their natural habitat at Lindzey Ranch in Wyoming by the Zoo's veterinary staff.

Program Objectives

- We will participate in the annual Wyoming Toad Species Survival Plan meeting held each spring.
- Depending on the discussions held at this meeting, we hope to continue annual breeding attempts with associated releases to the wild.
- With one hugely successful breeding season under its belt, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo looks forward to helping create a brighter future for endangered Wyoming toads.
- We hope to educate our visiting public to the plight of the Wyoming toad and what Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is doing about it.
- We hope to find funding to continue this program into the future.

WYOMING TOAD FACTS

Vernacular Name: Wyoming Toad

Scientific Name: Bufo hemiophrys baxteri

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Family: Bufonidae

Geographic Range: Albany County, Wyoming

Physical Characteristics: The adult Wyoming toad averages 2.2 inches in length. The dorsal surface has rounded warts. The background color is dark brown, gray or greenish with small dark blotches. The belly is spotted. Males have dark throats. The adult is smaller than other toad species and has fused cranial crests.

Ecological Niche: Secondary consumer (predator). Toads feed on small insects.



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Reproduction: Lays hundreds of eggs encased in a long tube of jelly. Eggs hatch in a matter of days.

Zoo Diet: Crickets, mealworms