

**WESTERN SPADEFOOT TOAD  
(SPEA HAMMONDII)**



*Description*

The adult spadefoot toad is 1.5 to 2.5 inches (38 to 63 mm) in length. It is dusky gray or green above and whitish below. These toads often have 4 irregular light-colored stripes on the back. There is a wedge-shaped, glossy black "spade" on each hind foot which is used for digging backwards into the soil.

Western spadefoot toads breed in winter and spring, typically January through May, in quiet streams and

temporary pools. Eggs are laid in late winter and spring, with tadpoles transforming into adult toads in late spring and summer. Tadpoles are olive or gray above.

This toad is primarily active only at night. It constructs burrows in loose soils to at least 3 feet in depth. The burrowing site may be far from the breeding area. It also uses burrows of other animals, such as kangaroo rats and ground squirrels. Adults will emerge from burrows after soaking rains in fall or winter.

*Habitat*

It is found in grasslands, washes, floodplains of rivers, alluvial fans, playas, and alkali flats. It also ranges into the foothills. It generally prefers areas with open vegetation and short grasses, where soil is sandy or gravelly.

Frogs and their eggs are extremely sensitive to any type of chemical such as pesticides.

*Range/distribution*

The western spadefoot toad is found in Fresno, Kern, Madera, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tehama, and Tulare counties.

Photo: USGS Western Ecological Research Center. URL: <http://www.werc.usgs.gov/fieldguide/scha.htm>. Accessed October 12, 2002