



TOAD'S of PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania is home to a wide variety of snakes, salamanders, turtles, and frogs. Yet, only two species of toad call this state home. Because of their similarities, we will look at the two species of *Anaxyrus* toads found in Pennsylvania, the American Toad and the Fowler's Toad.

You have probably seen many toads while spending time outdoors, but which species was it?



The American Toad and the less common Fowler's Toad both occupy much of the state, though the American Toad is far more common. Both species are very similar in average size, though the American Toad can occasionally reach a much larger maximum size. The warts are encircled in black spots on both species, and both can have very similar colorations. This is why these species can be difficult to tell apart at a quick glance. But there are a few characteristics that can help you to distinguish the Fowler's Toad from the American Toad.



The American Toad (*Anaxyrus Americanus*)

can be found all over the state, and are very common throughout their range. They are generally reddish to brown, but can be a more vivid yellow, or even almost black. They have 1 or 2 warts, inside each of the black spots on their backs. Some have a middorsal stripe running down their backs, but it is not very distinct when present. The underside is a dark cream colored, with black spots extending from the chin and down the chest. The habitat of the American Toad is very general; spanning virtually anywhere from open meadows, to rocky hillsides, to your own backyard. They are usually found near water in the spring during breeding season, but can be found long distances from water during the summer and fall.

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The Fowler's Toad (*Anaxyrus fowleri*)

can be found everywhere except the upper portions of the state. They are not encountered as frequently as the American, but if you find a population they can be very abundant. The coloration is very similar to the American Toad, though Fowler's Toad tend to be more vividly patterned, and sometimes have a paler gray to greenish color. The black spots on their back usually have between 4 and 6 spots inside, compared to the American Toad which only has 1-2. The middorsal stripe is more frequent in this species and, when present, can be quite vivid. The underside is very similar in color to the American Toad, lacking the black spots. Sometimes a single black spot is present on the chest of the Fowler's Toad. This species is found in lowlands, often near streams or rivers where the soil is sandy or gravelly and well drained.



If you are still in doubt of the species you are looking at then you can check the postorbital crest and the paratoid glands. In American Toads, they generally are not touching, or maybe slightly touching. In Fowler's Toads, there is a broad area of contact between the postorbital crest and the paratoid gland. Hybrids can be found in this species, but are not very common. If you are unsure, send your pictures to PAHERP ID (www.pahepid.com) for verification.

