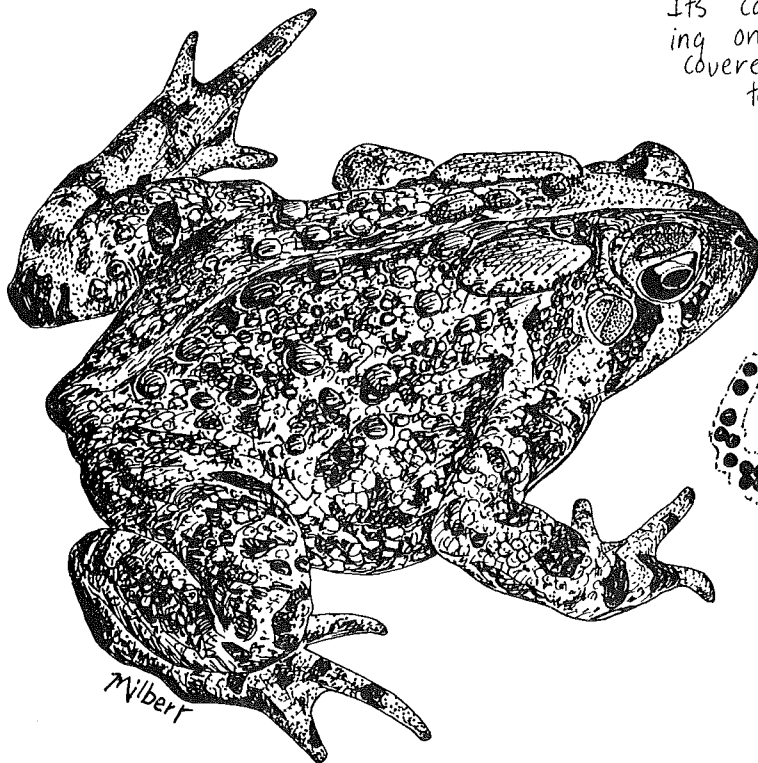


# River Bend Naturalists Notebook

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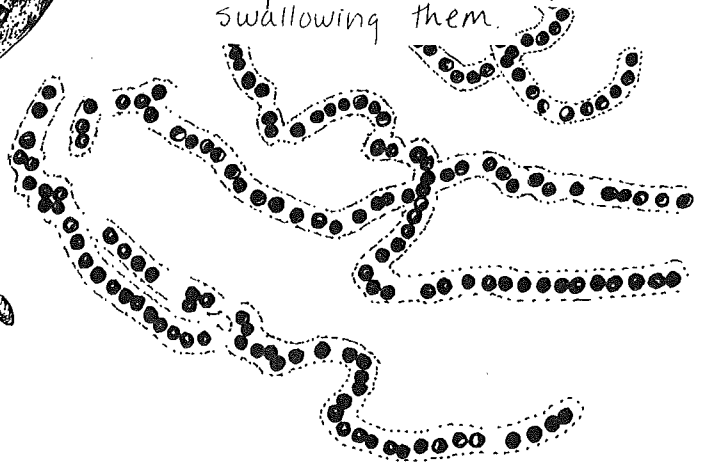
## AMERICAN TOAD

*Bufo americanus*



The American Toad is common in gardens and about lawns where there is damp sod and concealment from enemies. It is a friend of the gardener as it lives on cutworms, potato beetles, ants, slugs, earthworms, moth and butterfly larvae, aphids, sowbugs and spiders. Its fleshy tongue is attached near the front of the lower jaw. The toad sits still until an unsuspecting insect comes near. It then will lunge forward with mouth open, tongue arched outward. The sticky tip loops around its prey and is withdrawn into the mouth.

The American Toad is about 4" in length. Its color varies from grey to brown depending on the soil it lives on. Its topside is covered with warts, which do not transfer to humans. The warts do emit a poisonous substance which creates a foul taste in the mouth of its predators, which often causes the toad to be released. American Toads can also fill themselves with air which prevents snakes from swallowing them.



In fall toads burrow into the soft ground to depths below the frost line to hibernate. They emerge from hibernation about the first of May, then move to grassy, temporary ponds for breeding. At this time their mating "song" can be heard. It is a high-pitched trill which may continue uninterrupted for twenty seconds or more. The females arrive on the ponds a few days after the males. The eggs are laid in strands, like strings of beads, attached to submerged vegetation. Toad eggs hatch in two to twelve days, and the tadpoles transform into small toads in 40 to 60 days, depending on temperatures. Toads mature in 2 to 3 years.