



✓ Bufo Americanus.

On Stone by S. Cichowski

F.S. Duval, Lith. Phila.

BUFO AMERICANUS.—*Leconte.*

Plate IV.

CHARACTERS. Head short; snout rounded; nostrils placed near the snout; tympanum moderate and very distinct; parotid gland narrow, elongated, elliptical; body short, bloated; anterior extremities large, fingers free; posterior extremities short, toes semi-palmated; a spade-like process at the root of the first toe.

SYNONYMES. *Bufo Americanus*, *Leconte.*

Bufo musicus, *Harlan*, Journ. Acad. Nat. Scien., vol. v. p. 344.

Common Toad, *Vulgo.*

DESCRIPTION. The head is short, with the snout almost rounded; the mouth is much smaller than in the *Bufo lentiginosus*, and the jaws are entire. The nostrils are small, and placed near the snout. The eyes are large and brilliant; the pupil dark, with the iris presenting a minutely reticulated appearance of black and gold. The superciliary ridges are but slightly elevated, and do not terminate in a knob posteriorly; the membrane of the tympanum is moderate and very apparent; the parotid glands are narrow, elliptical, and very long.

The body is short, thick, and bloated, and has its superior surface covered with warts of different sizes. A longitudinal line of dirty-white runs from the occiput to the vent; on each side of this are several conspicuous, well-defined spots, varying in colour, size, and shape: we sometimes find them systematically arranged in rows. Along the flanks is a broad but indistinct band, extending to the posterior extremities; this band is so broken as to give the appearance of a

row of black and white spots. The abdomen is granulated, and of a dirty yellowish-white.

The anterior extremities are short; their upper surface dusky, with minute spots of white; the lower is of the same colour as the abdomen; the fingers are distinct, and not palmated. The posterior extremities are short, their superior surface ash-colour, with blotches and transverse bands of black, extending to the tarsus; the leg is shorter than the thigh; the toes are semi-palmated, and five in number; a large spade-like process occupies the place of a sixth, on the metatarsus, as in *Scaphiopus*.

DIMENSIONS. Length from snout to vent, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches; of thigh, 1 inch; of leg, less than an inch; of tarsus and toes, 1 inch 6 lines.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. This is the most widely diffused of all the American toads. I have observed it from the mountains of Maine through all the Atlantic states. It is, however, remarkable that this animal leaves the sea shore in the south; for I have never met with it in the low country of South Carolina, although common in the upper districts of the state. Leconte has traced it along the western side of the Alleghanies, and in the valley of the Mississippi.

HABITS. This animal is very mild and timid, living under stones or dead or decaying trees, or in holes in the earth, and frequently making its way into cellars, and dark and lonely corners: as evening approaches, it issues from its place of concealment in search of insects, and at these times frequently falls a prey to snakes and owls. It may be brought to a partial state of domestication, and will swallow flies from the hand.

Early in the spring these animals resort to shallow pools in great numbers, for the purpose of depositing their spawn, and at these times their music is very

familiar to all, consisting of a prolonged trill, continued by different individuals, both day and night, and not unpleasant when at a sufficient distance.

The toad is looked upon with aversion by the greater part of mankind; its swollen body, its warty and tuberculous skin, with the large parotid glands, give it such a repulsive appearance, that it seems hard to believe an innocuous disposition can belong to a shape and colour so offensive to the eye; hence the vulgar have always considered it venomous: it is nevertheless perfectly harmless, destroying only the insects that nature has apportioned for its food. To an unhandsome exterior, however, it often owes its safety, being very abundant and entirely helpless.

It has been commonly supposed that the humour exuding from the skin and glands is poisonous, yet no experiments have proved it so, and certainly no injury has ever arisen from handling or examining the animal. Experiments have been made in Europe with the secretions of the common toad of that continent, and apparently with different results; for naturalists are still at variance—Laurenti* considered the exudation innocuous, while Oken† believes it poisonous, and his opinion is supported by some interesting experiments of Davy,‡ which prove that “the skin of the European toad is possessed of minute follicles, secreting a thick yellow fluid, of a poisonous nature.”

GENERAL REMARKS. Leconte was the first to separate this toad from the southern animal, with which it had been previously confounded.

Schlegel considers the *Bufo Americanus* as identical with the common toad of Europe, from which however it differs specifically.

1. The head is smaller in proportion.

* Laurenti, Synop. Rep. p. 195.

† Oken, Zool., B. II., § 198.

‡ Dr. Davy, Phil. Trans. for 1826, Part II., p. 127.

2. The body is less full and bloated.
3. Its motion and gait are much more lively and active.
4. It differs entirely in having a spade-like process at the root of the first toe, which in a measure approximates it to the Scaphiopus.

Leconte first proposed calling this animal *Bufo Americanus*; and although he has never published a description, still it is due to him to retain the name, which seems to me sufficiently appropriate; for although there are many toads in the United States, there are none so common, so widely extended, and so much like the *Bufo communis* of the old world. Indeed, we regard it as the representative of that animal in North America, and have taken it as the type of our genus *Bufo*.



Holbrook, John Edwards. 1842. "Bufo americanus – Leconte." *North American herpetology; or, A description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States* 5, 17–20.
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