



Cane toads in Australia

The **cane toad** (scientific name – *Bufo marinus*) is a large stocky amphibian with dry warty skin. They naturally occur in Southern USA and the tropics of South America.

History

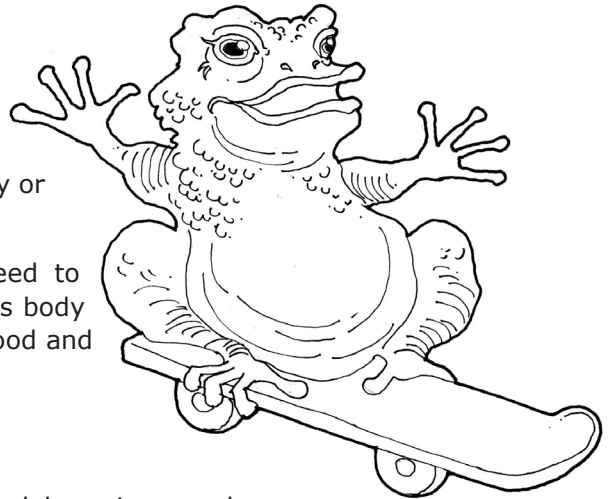
In 1935 cane toads were deliberately introduced into far north Queensland to try and control cane beetles, a major pest of sugar cane. It is thought that the conditions within the canefields were not suitable for the cane toad and it quickly moved on to discover an Australian landscape full of suitable places to breed and feed.

Cane toads continue to spread across much of Australia. They can be found in most parts of Queensland, northern New South Wales, around Kakadu in the Northern Territory and recently the Kimberly in Western Australia. Where they occur there are always large numbers of toads.

Habitat

Adult cane toads can invade most warm habitats including mangroves, rainforests, grasslands, woodlands and even sand dunes. They are active at night during the warmer months and take shelter in moist crevices during the day or when the weather is cold and dry.

Unlike Australia's native frogs, cane toads do not need to keep their skin moist. A toad can lose up to 50% of its body water and cover large areas at night in the search for food and water.



Breeding

During the breeding season, male cane toads settle near lakes, rivers and even backyard ponds and start to call in the hope of attracting a female.

Cane toads lay their eggs in still or slow flowing water. Females can produce between 8,000 – 35,000 eggs at a time and usually breed twice a year. The eggs hatch after a couple of days and tiny tadpoles emerge. Tadpoles develop into baby toads or toadlets after several weeks or many months depending on water temperature and access to food.

Diet

Adult cane toads will eat almost anything it can fit in its mouth including dead animals and pet food scraps. Beetles, honey bees, ants and crickets are mostly on the cane toads' menu but they have also been known to eat smaller cane toads, native frogs, small snakes and lizards and occasionally small mammals.

A cane toad tadpole will eat algae and aquatic plants.