
COMMON NAMES FOR FROGS AND TOADS IN OKLAHOMA¹

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Ornithologists, through the American Orthonologists Union, have worked out a well-known scheme of numbering and giving common names to North American birds which is so effective as to eliminate the necessity for the scientific name being given if identification is all that is desired. American herpetologists have so far failed to provide a similar simple scheme of vernacular naming for their animals. Among the frogs and toads, the common nomenclature is in a chaotic condition, as many as five or six different designations often being applied to the same common form; and often the same name is applied to two or more different species from the same or different areas. As examples, *Bufo compactilis* Wiegmann has been called the spade-footed toad, Sonoran toad, western toad, and desert toad; *Bufo debellis* Girard is also sometimes called the Sonoran toad; and the name spadefoot toad is now almost universally applied to species of the genus *Scaphiopus*. One of the commoner vernacular names of *Rana aesopus* (Cope) of the Deep South is gopher frog, a name given because of its habit of living in the burrows of the gopher turtle, these burrows being mostly confined to sandy hills and the higher pine barrens. Yet, in Oklahoma we have two subspecies of frogs (*Rana areolata areolata* Baird and Girard and *R. a. circulosa* Rice and Davis), each of which is here called the gopher frog, although neither is in any way associated with gopher turtles or their burrows. Instead, these frogs inhabit burrows of crayfishes, which, as is well known, are found on lower rather than higher lands.

In a scientific sense the vernacular name of an organism means little. Yet, from another viewpoint, this is quite a vital matter. We scientists are always complaining that the public misunderstands our work but we often make little effort to make it easy for people untrained in the sciences to understand us. Generations of high school students, Boy Scout troops, and similar groups have need of authentic and consistent common names for all of our common organisms, whether plants or animals. Such names should be standardized and then consistently used by scientists whenever they have occasion to use vernacular names.

Ideally, such standardizations should, of course, be on a national scale and sponsored by the organizations most concerned with the respective groups of organisms. Suggestions for the need of standardizations of vernacular names for North American reptiles and amphibians have been offered at least twice to the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpe-

¹ Contribution from the Zoological Laboratory of the University of Oklahoma.

tologists without tangible results. Therefore, in order to arouse greater interest in the matter and at the same time to make an attempt to give those interested in the frogs and toads of Oklahoma some tangible basis upon which to act, I have proposed a list of vernacular names for the species and subspecies known to inhabit our state.

Dr. N. Graham Netting of the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, sent suggestions to me as to the criteria to use in the selection of vernacular names. These are as follows. "If standardization is to be achieved the name which is most appropriate for a particular species, or the name which is in widest use throughout the range of the form, should be given preference over one which is of local application only. Certain names which impart false taxonomic position (Congo eel) or which imply inaccuracies of structures, markings, or ranges must be ruthlessly discarded. In general, names descriptive of the animal, its habitat or its behavior should be given first preference, geographic names second preference, and patronymics should be used only as a last resort."

Following these principles, I propose the following list of vernacular names for the twenty-five or twenty-six species and subspecies of frogs and toads known to occur in Oklahoma. Since a poorly chosen name is decidedly better than no name at all or than three or four names, I strongly urge all who have occasion to use such common names to adopt this list tentatively—not because it is necessarily the best that could be devised, but because further inconsistencies and confusions may thus be minimized or avoided. I further suggest that, should some national body eventually attempt a standardization, the results of such work should supercede the list given here.

- (1) *Acris crepitans* Baird, Northern Cricket Frog
- (2) *Bufo americanus americanus* Holbrook, American Toad
- (3) *B. cognatus* Say, Great Plains Toad
- (4) *B. compactilis* Wiegmann, Desert Toad
- (5) *B. insidiosus* Girard, Northern Little Green Toad
- (6) *B. punctatus* Baird and Girard, Canyon Toad
- (7) *B. woodhousii fowleri* (Hinckley), Fowler's Toad
- (8) *B. w. woodhousii* Girard, Rocky Mountain Toad
- (9) *Hyla cinerea cinerea* (Schneider), Green Tree Toad
- (10) *H. crucifer crucifer* (Wied), Spring Peeper
- (11) *H. versicolor versicolor* Le Conte, Common Tree Toad
- (12) *Microhyla olivacea* (Hallowell), Northern Narrow-Mouthed Toad
- (13) *Pseudacris clarkii* (Baird), Spotted Chorus Frog
- (14) *Ps. streckeri* Wright and Wright, Northern Ornate Chorus Frog
- (15) *Ps. triseriata* (Wied), Striped Chorus Frog
- (16) *Rana areolata areolata* Baird and Girard, Southern Crayfish Frog
- (17) *R. a. circulosa* Rice and Davis, Northern Crayfish Frog
- (18) *R. catesbeiana* Shaw, Bullfrog
- (19) *R. clamitans* Latreille, Green Frog
- (20) *R. palustris* Le Conte, Pickerel Frog
- (21) *R. pipiens* Schreiber,² Leopard Frog
- (22) *R. sphenoccephala* (Cope), Southern Leopard Frog
- (23) *Scaphiopus bombifrons* Cope, Plains Spadefoot
- (24) *S. couchii* Baird, Southern Spadefoot
- (25) *S. hammondi* Baird, Western Spadefoot
- (26) *S. huerterii* Strecker, Savannah Spadefoot

² Perhaps not in Oklahoma but included for convenience if it should prove to be here.