



Symbol used for  
“Learn 10” class  
study species



# Photo Field Identification Guide to Reptiles & Amphibians of Chelan County, WA

*Wenatchee Naturalist* Course

Text and photos by Susan Ballinger. Additional  
credited photos generously provided by Rod Gilbert,  
Lisa Robinson, Dave Hillstad, and John Sullivan at  
<http://www.wildherps.com/>

***Pseudacris regilla* Northern Pacific tree frog** Key ID features: small, somewhat flattened body, narrow waist, long legs, smooth skin, pointed snout. Adults <2 inches long. COLOR: dorsal body variable-green to brown or combination.

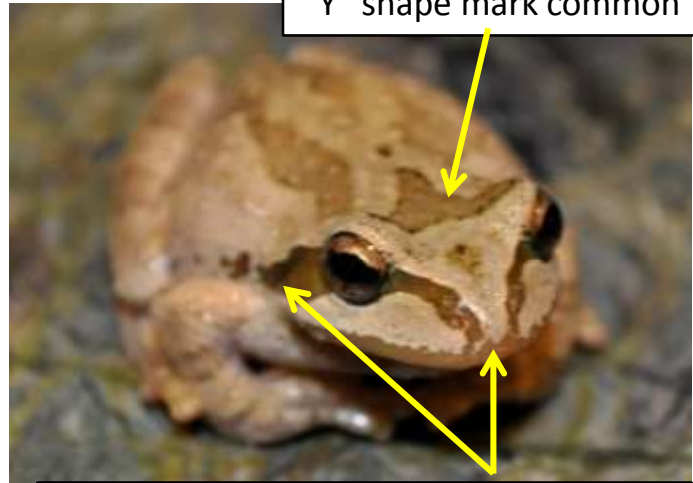


Adult length: up to 2 inches

Tips of toes have sticky, broaden circular discs that adhere well to smooth surfaces



ventral surfaces- mostly white

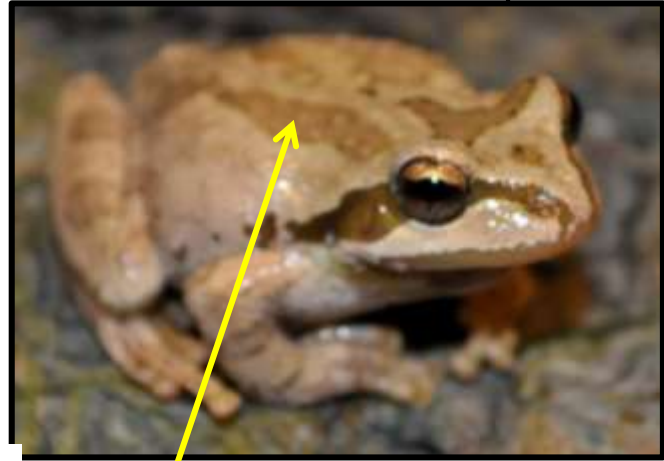


"Y" shape mark common

Conspicuous dark mask from tip of nose through eye to shoulder



Varies in color; depends upon food source



Often, 2-3 stripes down back, may be discontinuous or absent

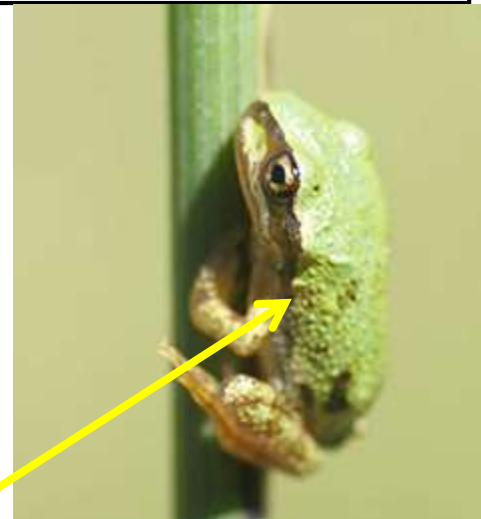


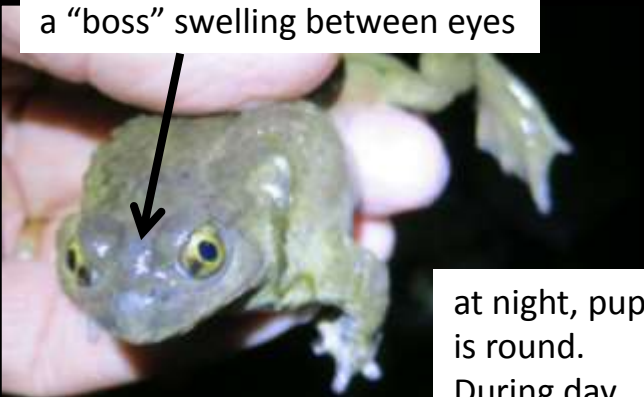
Photo John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com>

***Spea intermontana*** (formerly *Scaphiopus intermontanus*) **Great Basin spadefoot (toad)**

Key ID features: Has a sharp-edged, black horny spade on inside of hind feet-for digging. Uses alternating circular motions of 2 hind feet to push dirt out from under itself, and then over its sides and back. Active at night. Habitat: shrub-steppe, usually a variety of aquatic habitats for breeding.



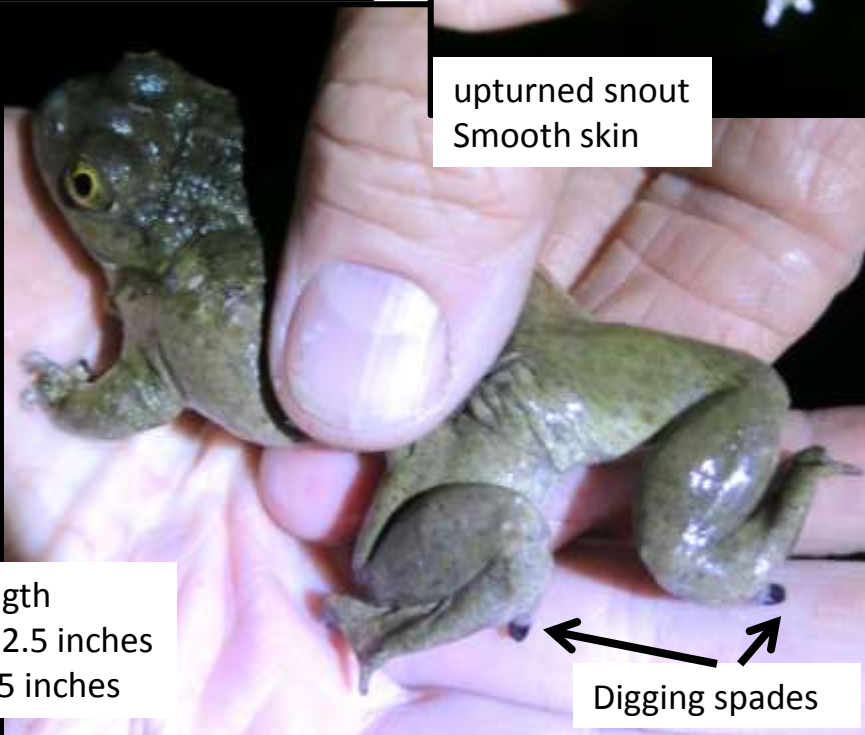
plump body,  
broad waist  
Short legs



a "boss" swelling between eyes

at night, pupil is round.  
During day, pupil is vertical

upturned snout  
Smooth skin



Digging spades

Adult length  
Females-2.5 inches  
Males-2.5 inches



***Anaxyrus boreas* (formerly *Bufo boreas*) Western toad:** stout body, blunt head, broad waist, short legs, dry warty skin. **Color** Dorsal- Varies from gray to red-brown to yellow to olive-green. Ventral-pale, mottled with dark blotches. Oval shaped parotoid glands



White-creamy stripe down center back

Photo: Lisa Robinson

Size: Up to 4.5-5 inches in length

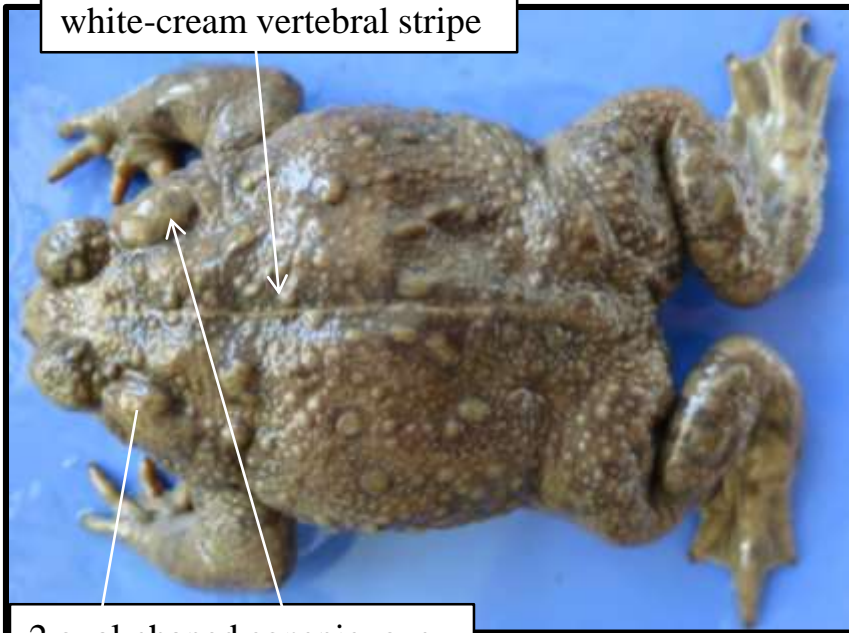


2 Photos: John Sullivan Photo: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com>





***Anaxyrus boreas* (formerly *Bufo boreas*) Western toad:** stout body, blunt head, broad waist, short legs, dry warty skin. **Color** Dorsal- Varies from gray to red-brown to yellow to olive-green. Ventral-pale, mottled with dark blotches.



white-cream vertebral stripe

2 oval-shaped conspicuous parotoid glands behind eyes



eyes- gold flecked, with horizontal pupils

Adults: 2-5 inch length

Habitat: grasslands, forests, marshes. Breed in ponds or shallow lakes. Active at night.



Each hind foot has a yellow rounded knob (tubercle) on underside. Aids in digging, allowing the ability to bury itself in dirt to avoid predators.

***Chrysemys picta* Painted turtle.** Key ID features: medium-sized aquatic turtle with dark colored carapace (upper shell) and bright red markings on the lower shell and underside marginal edges of carapace. Yellow lines on head, legs, and tail. Colorful markings usually visible on basking turtles.



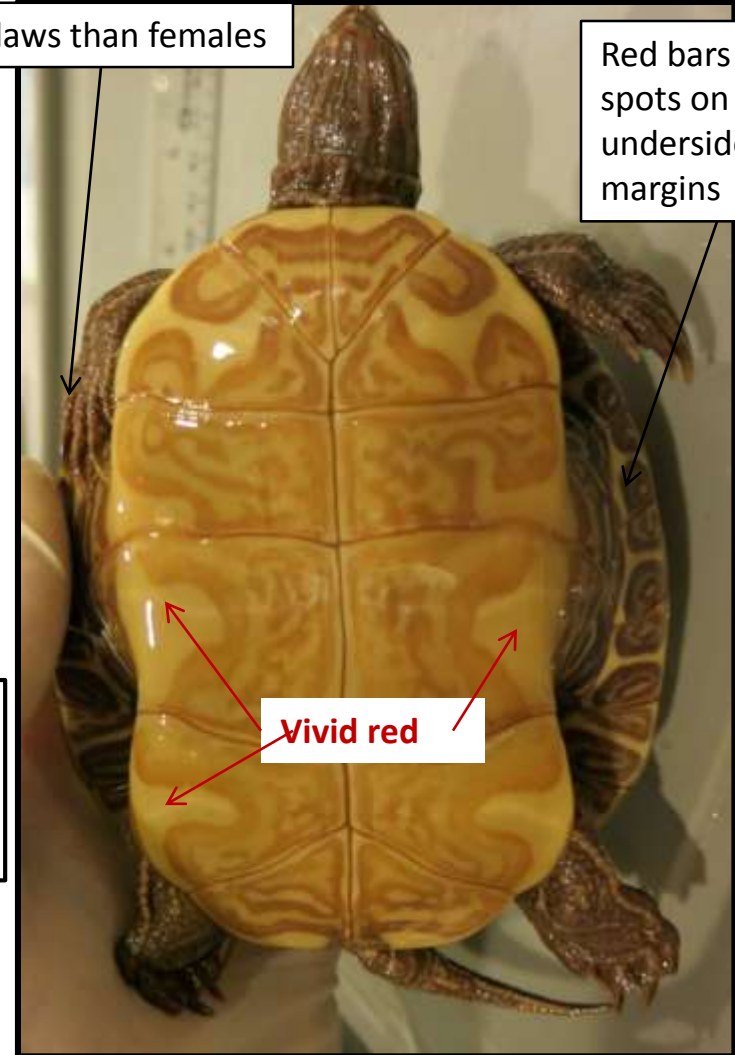
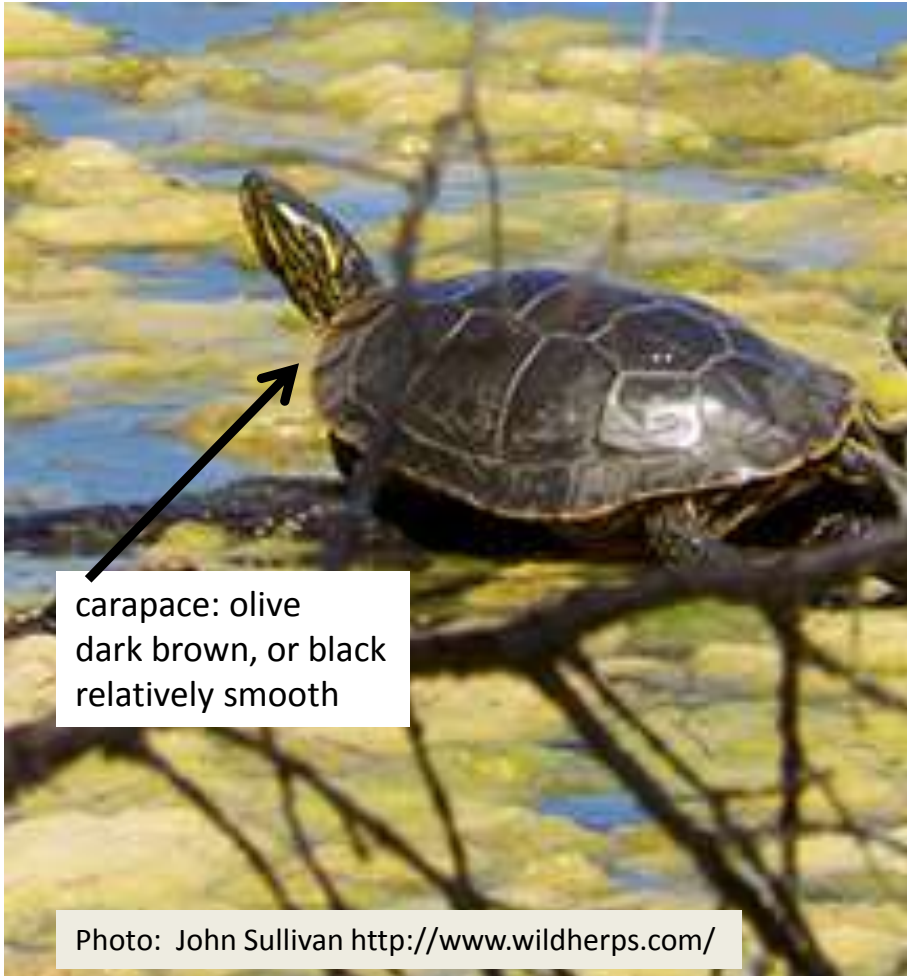
Photo: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com>

***Chrysemys picta* Painted turtle.** Key ID features: medium-sized aquatic turtle with dark colored carapace (upper shell) and bright red markings on the lower shell and underside marginal edges of carapace. Yellow lines on head, legs, and tail. Colorful markings usually visible on basking turtles.



Males have longer front claws than females

Red bars or spots on underside margins





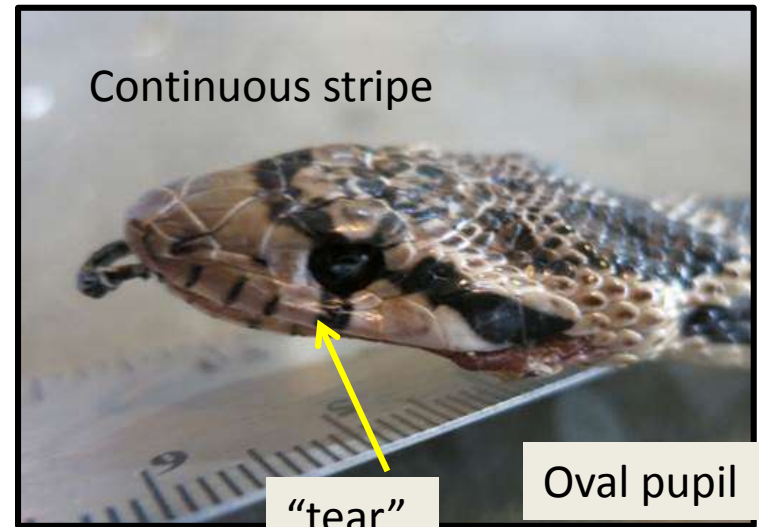
## *Pituophis catenifer catenifer* Pacific gopher snake

Key ID features: large, dark blotches, tail that tapers to the tip, distinct eye stripe. Defensive behavior mimics rattlesnake



Photo: Lisa Robinson

Male & Female, pre-mating behavior



Continuous stripe

"tear"

Oval pupil



Square dorsal spots

Banded tail

Somewhat triangular head



***Pituophis catenifer catenifer*** Pacific gopher snake Key ID features: large, dark blotches, tail that tapers to the tip, distinct eye stripe. Defensive behavior mimics rattlesnake



Square dorsal spots

Somewhat triangular head

Photo John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com/>



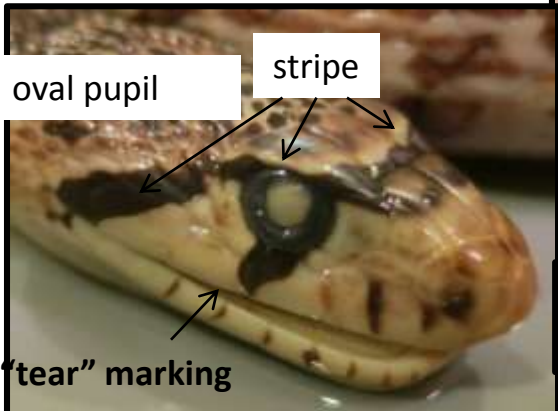
banded tail



Ventral side white, with black spots on edges



Keeled dorsal scales



oval pupil

stripe

'tear' marking



***Crotalus oreganus oreganus*** Northern Pacific rattlesnake Key ID features: heavy bodied with large dark spots, wide triangular head, distinct eye stripe, rattle at tail tip. Venomous. Cryptic coloration varies on habitat.



Bands on tail;  
rattle at tail tip



Ventral scales: white  
with dark blotches



Strongly  
keeled  
dorsal scales



Vertical pupil

Eye stripe

Heat sensitive pit



Photo: Lisa Robinson

***Plestiodon skiltonianus* (Formerly *Eumeces skiltonianus*) Western skink** Key ID features: small, slim, longitudinal striped lizard. Stripes extend from head onto the tail base. shiny scales, short legs, long bright blue tail in young, grades to blue-gray-brownish in older individuals.



Wide brown dorsal stripe with contrasting alternating light & dark stripes on either side.



Photo: John Sullivan

Forage for invertebrates during daytime, moving jerkily



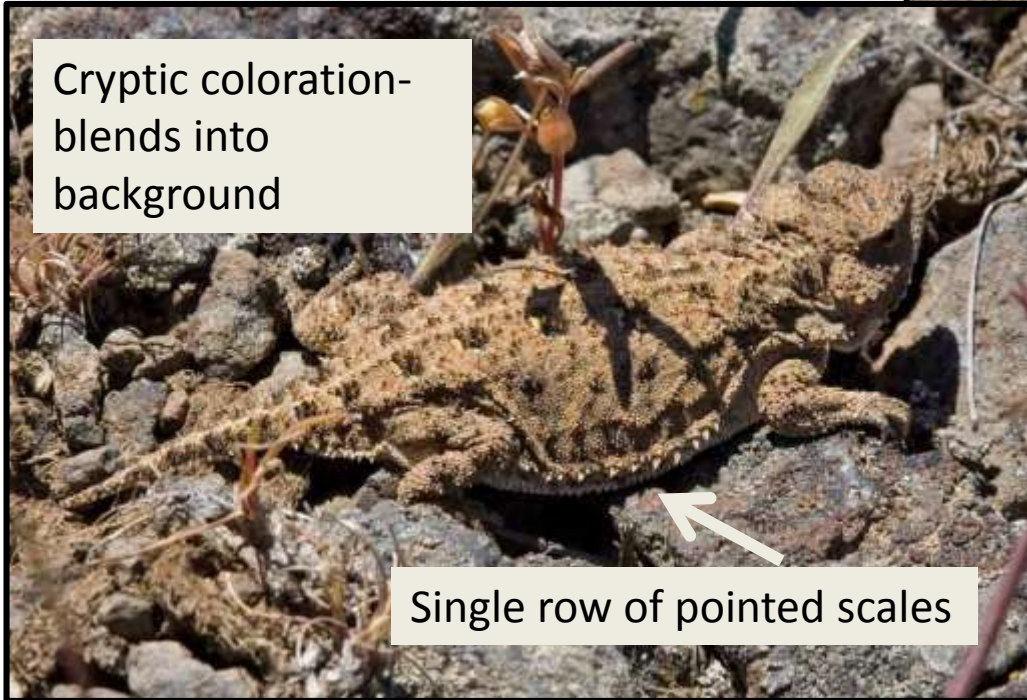
Photos: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com/>

Tail length 1.5-2 x  
Body length

Ventral side: light in  
color, without  
markings

Uniformly smooth  
shiny scales

***Phrynosoma douglasii*** Pygmy short-horned lizard Key ID features:  
flat round body with single row of pointed fringe-like scales on each side.  
Spines or “horns” project from back of head. Toad-like in appearance- called  
“horned toad”



Cryptic coloration-  
blends into  
background

Single row of pointed scales



Short legs

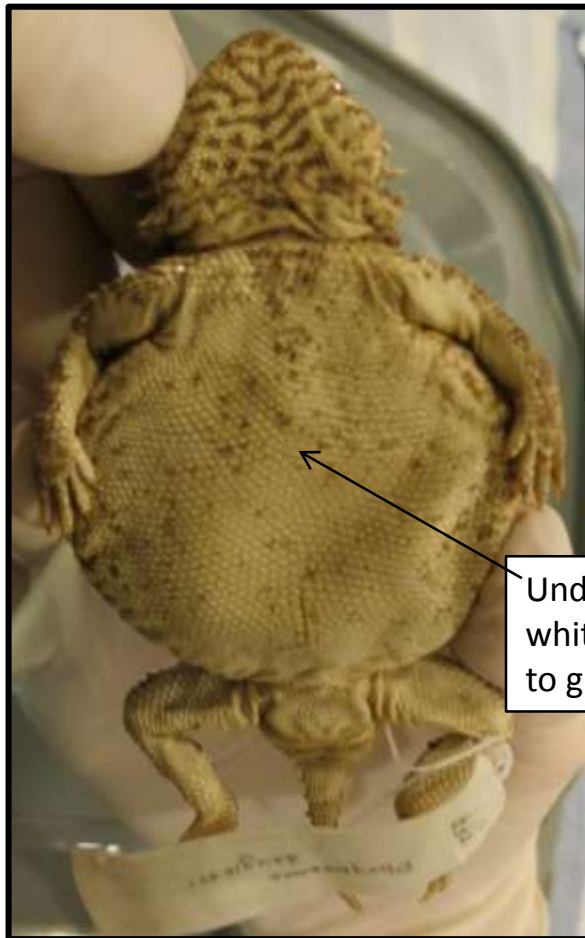
Short  
triangular  
tail



Blunt snout

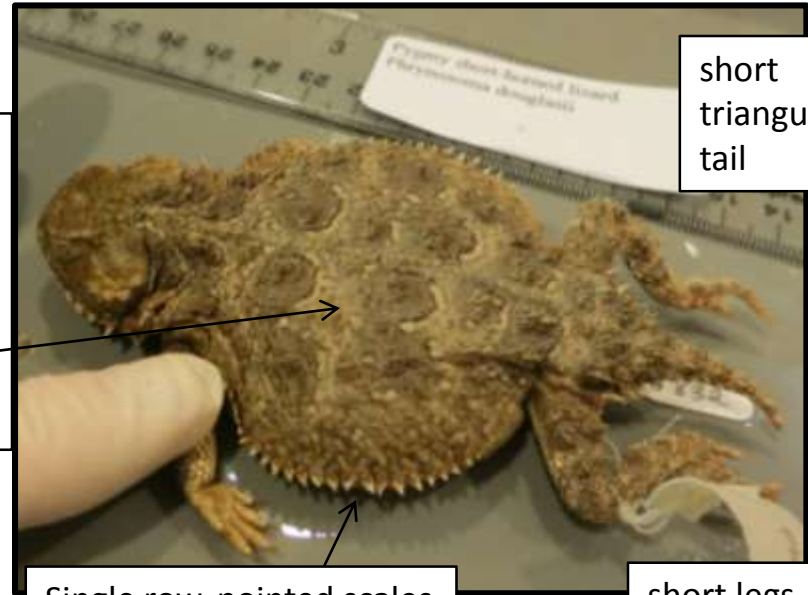
Habitat: shrub-steppe with well-drained soils  
that allow burrowing below the surface. Also use  
Lithosols (thin rocky soils).

***Phrynosoma douglasii* Pygmy short-horned lizard** Key ID features: flat round body with single row of pointed fringe-like scales on each side. Spines or “horns” project from back of head. Toad-like in appearance—called “horned toad”



Cryptic coloration to blend into background mottled dorsal pattern

Underside white, or yellowish to gray.



short triangular tail

Single row, pointed scales

short legs



blunt snout

Habitat: shrub-steppe with well-drained soil that allows burrowing below the surface. Also use lithosols.



## *Sceloporus occidentalis occidentalis* Northwestern fence lizard

key ID features: keeled, spiny scales & two rows of light & dark markings on dorsal side. Color: some shade of gray or brown

Photos: Lisa Robinson



Female: blue patches faint or lacking



Posterior surface of hind legs is yellow-orange with keeled scales

Male: Large blue patches on both sides of abdomen, and a blue throat patch (can be either solid or divided)



Adult eating grasshopper

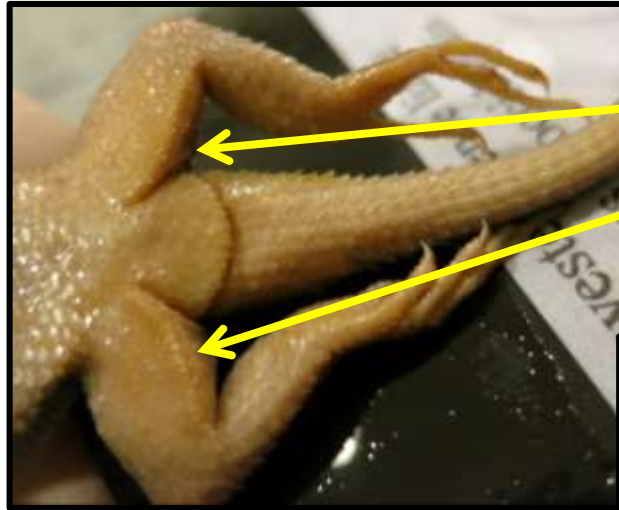
Dorsal scales are conspicuously free & pointed at back end

Up to 6.6 inches in length-nose to tail tip



juvenile

***Sceloporus occidentalis occidentalis*** Northwestern fence lizard Key ID features: keeled, spiny scales & two rows of light & dark markings on dorsal side. COLOR: some shade of gray or brown to almost black.

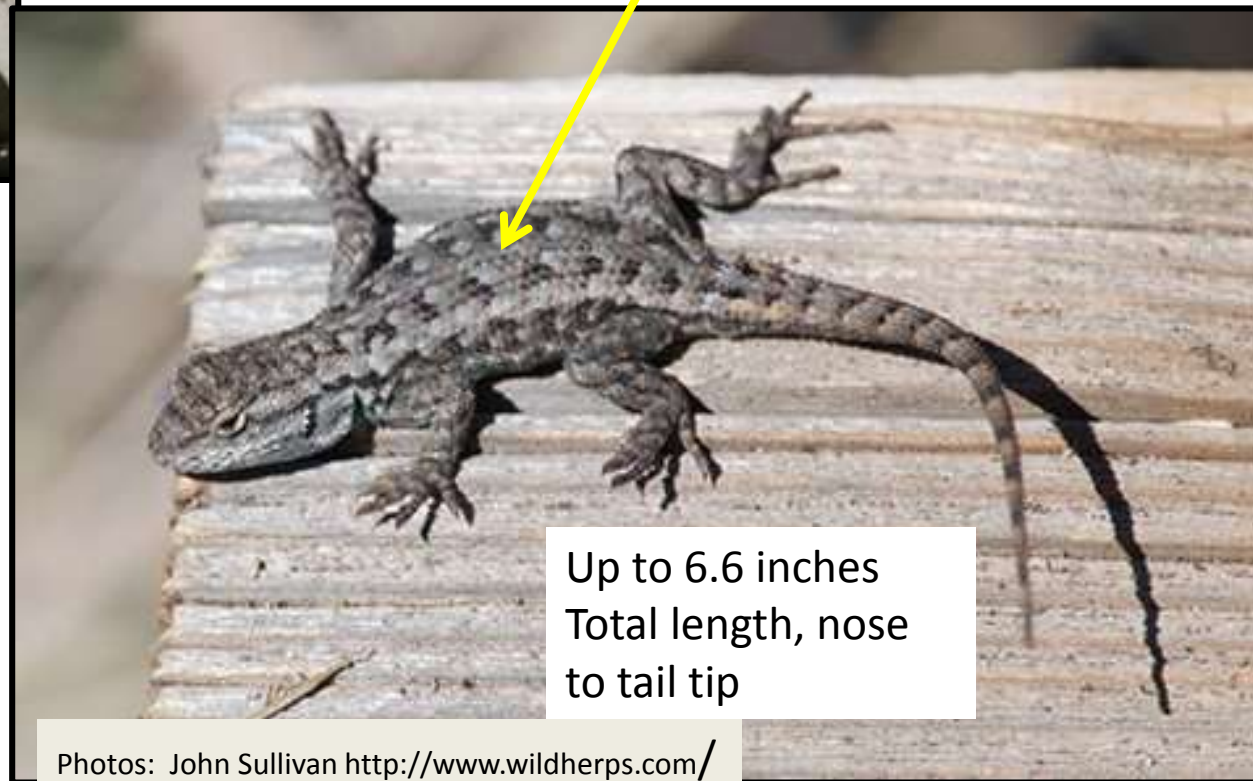


Posterior surface of hind legs yellow-orange with keeled scales

Dorsal scales are conspicuously free and pointed at back end

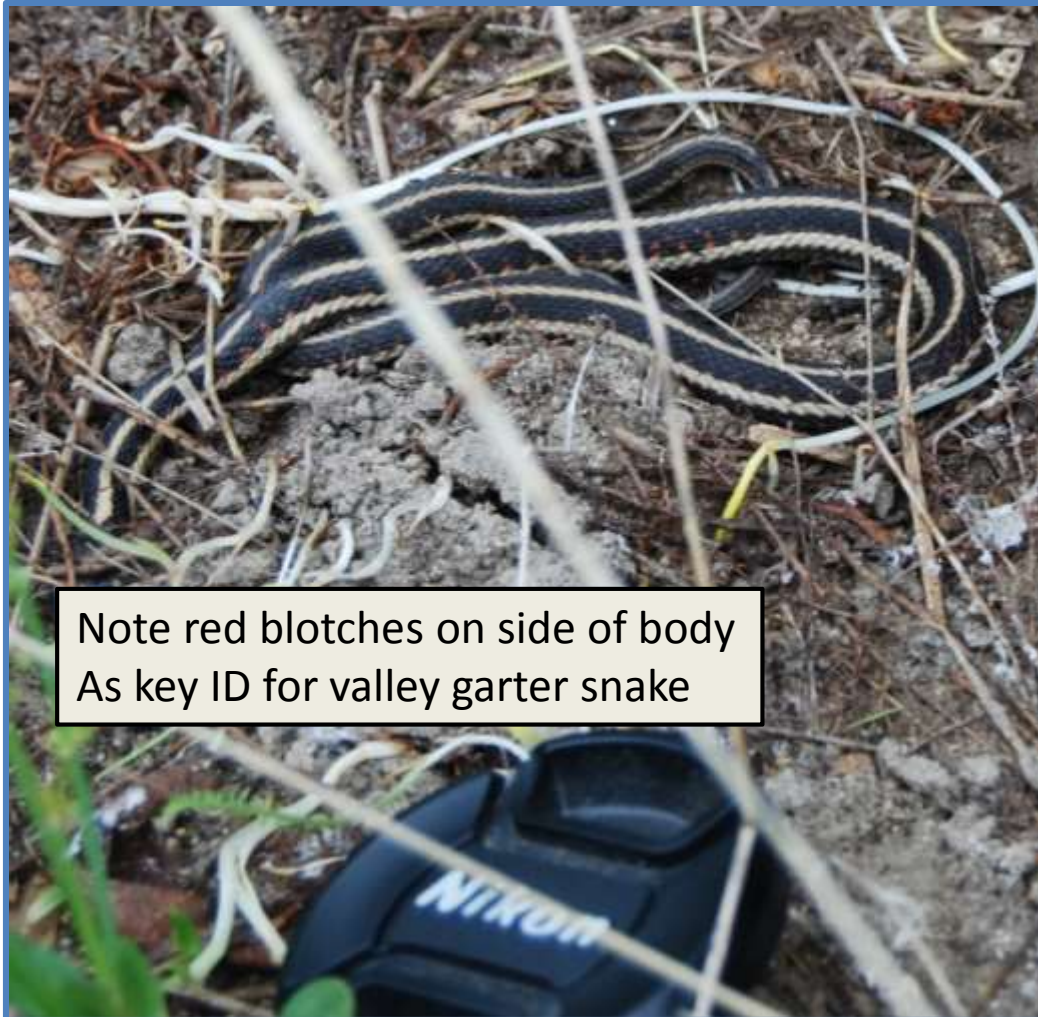


Blue throat patch: divided or solid. Faint or lacking in females



Up to 6.6 inches Total length, nose to tail tip

***Thamnophis sirtalis fitchi* Valley garter snake** (common garter snake) Key ID features: Typically 3 dorsal stripes, red blotches on sides of body above the lateral stripes. Red cheek blotch usually present. Good swimmers. COLOR: dorsal black body with yellow stripes, ventral body yellow or buff.



Note red blotches on side of body  
As key ID for valley garter snake



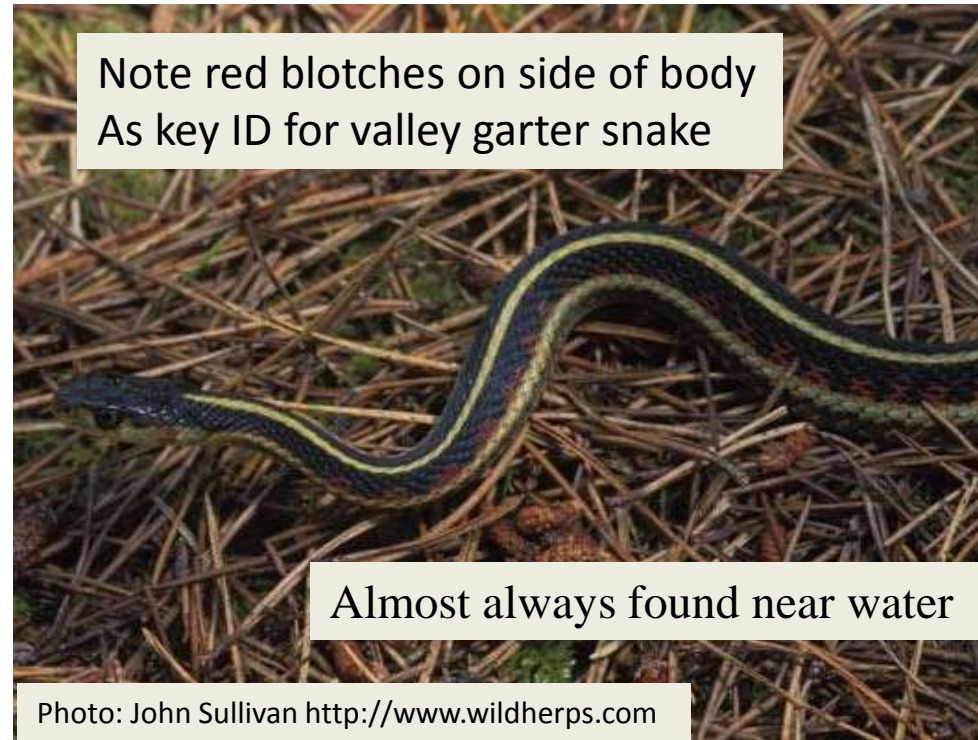
Swimming in Columbia River  
Photo: Lisa Robinson



Moving quickly out of the water & up  
the muddy bank into shrub cover  
along Columbia River



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One of few vertebrates that can prey successfully on rough-skinned newts- active toxin found in their livers after predation.

*Pituophis catenifer catenifer* Pacific gopher snake  
Mating series photographed by Lisa Robinson



***Coluber constrictor* Racer.** KEY ID Features: slender, large eyes with round pupils, broad head. **Color:** uniform olive to blue-gray dorsally, with yellow becoming whiter near the head ventrally.

3 Photos: Lisa Robinson



Photo: Dave Hillstad



***Coluber constrictor* Racer.** KEY ID Features: slender, large eyes with round pupils , broad head. **Color:** uniform olive to blue-gray dorsally, with yellow becoming whiter near the head ventrally. Young have a non-uniform body color pattern.

Distinguish a **young racer** from a **young gopher snake** by smooth scales, larger eyes, & uniform coloration toward tail. Young racers have brown saddle-shaped blotches dorsally.



Photo: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com/>

Distinguish a **young racer** from a **night snake** by the vertical pupils. Night snake has dark upper jaw stripe

## Juvenile snake comparison:

*Coluber constrictor* Racer

*Pituophis c. catenifer* Pacific gopher snake

Have similar tapered tail, blotching on dorsal side, & habitat. Both active in day

**Racer:** smooth scales, no eye mask, indistinct blotching, uniform color near tip of tail, relatively larger eye

**Gopher snake:** keeled dorsal scales, eye stripe from jaw, through eye, & across snout, with “tear” below eye- this is best distinguishing characteristic.



***Charina bottae* Northern Rubber boa:** KEY ID features: Blunt wedge-shaped head, stout body, indistinct neck, small eyes with vertical pupils, rubbery feel & appearance, Color: Adults-Uniform dorsally, varying from olive green to light to dark brown. Young-tan or pinkish

Photo: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com/>



Short blunt tail, resembles head



Like racers, have a uniform color. Differing from rubber boas, Racers have : larger eyes with round pupils, longer & thinner body, have a long pointed tail and crawl faster & are more aggressive

***Contia tenuis* Sharptail snake** Key ID Features: slender & small (8-16 inches), spine-like tipped tail (falls off due to injury, so may not be present), distinct ventral crossbar stripes of black or white/cream. COLOR: reddish –brown to gray, with red intensifying toward the tail. Head usually dark brown

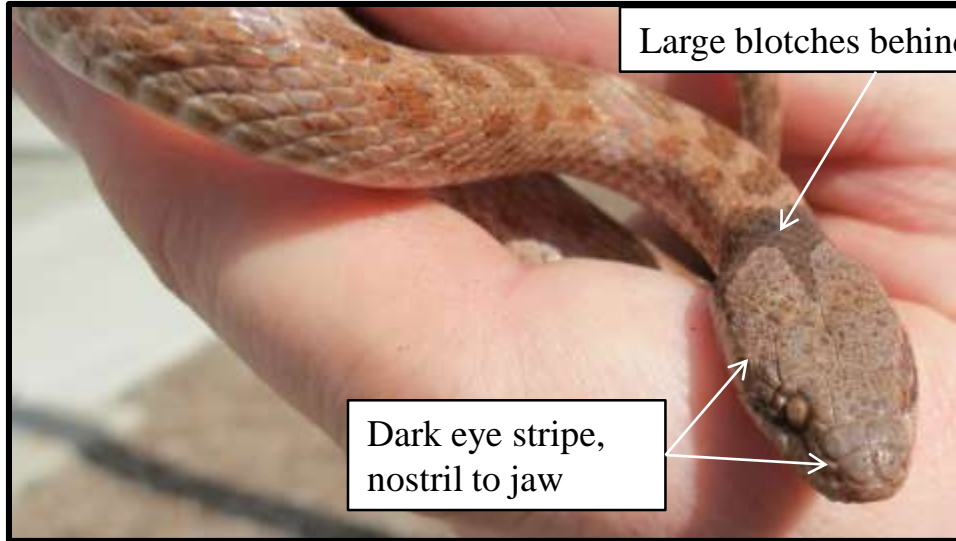
This is a rare and protected snake in Washington. Secretive & in damp conditions. Found in Talus at forest edges or open meadows.

Photos taken by John Sullivan in Garland Ranch Regional Park, Monterey County, California  
<http://www.wildherps.com/>



***Hypsiglena chlorophaea deserticola* (Formerly *Hypsiglena torquata*)**

**Northern desert night snake** Small (<46 cm.). Color: gray-tan- or light brown with brown blotches on entire body length. Vertical pupils shows in bright light. Active at night, secretive. In daytime, retreats to talus or rodent burrows.



Ventral: pearly white scales



Habitat: shrub-steppe in rocky areas, often in transition zones between habitats where prey abundance is high. Hunts lizards, amphibians reptile eggs, small snakes, like the sharp-tail.



***Thamnophis elegans* Western terrestrial garter snake** Key ID Features: hard to distinguish between Washington's 3 garter snake species. Presence of 8 upper labial scales is diagnostic. COLOR- highly variable color and pattern; gray to brown with 3 yellow to brown stripes and small dark spots.

Thin center stripe & 2 lateral stripes; yellow or cream

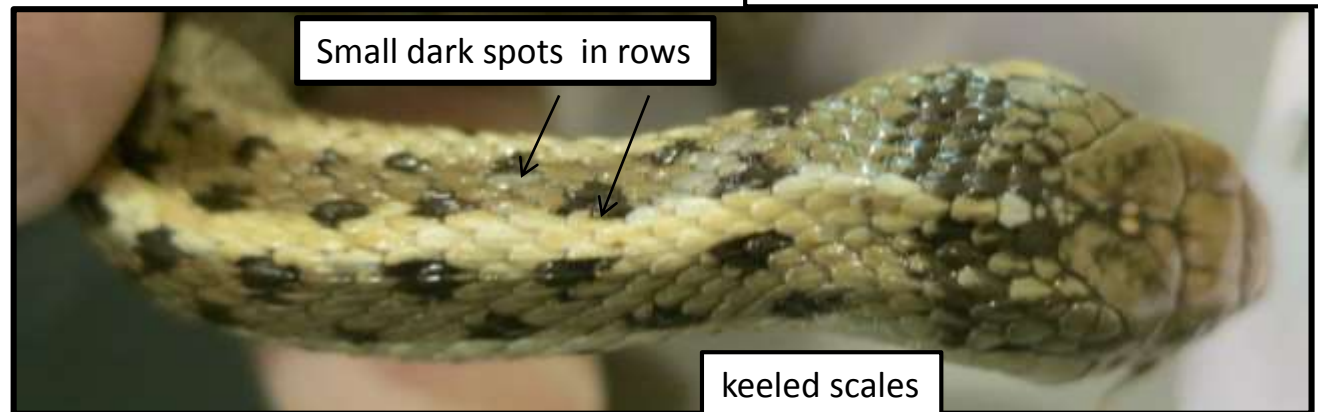


Photo: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com/>



Ventral- gray with black along midline

Small dark spots in rows



keeled scales

8 upper labial scales-Diagnostic



***Thamnophis elegans* Western terrestrial garter snake** Key ID Features: hard to distinguish between Washington's 3 garter snake species. Presence of 8 upper labial scales is diagnostic. COLOR- highly variable color and pattern; gray to brown with 3 yellow to brown stripes and small dark spots.



Photos: Lisa Robinson



Note lack of red blotches on sides of body, above the stripes. If you can, snap a photo of the head (side-view) so you can count the upper "lip" labial scales- 8 scales for this species

*Sceloporus o. occidentalis* Northwestern fence lizard

Mating sequence, photographed by Lisa Robinson  
9/22/14, Wenatchee, WA



**How to distinguish two lizards:**  
***Sceloporus occidentalis occidentalis* Northwestern fence lizard**  
***Sceloporus graciosus* Sagebrush lizard**

Snout-to-vent length  
56-87 mm.



Snout to vent length:  
<60 mm.

**Fence:** larger; have double or single blue throat patch, larger more pointed dorsal scales, keeled scales on back of thigh, yellow on back of hind limbs. Blue belly patches outlined in black. Habitat: dry forests, bitterbrush-grasslands, and grasslands. Associated with rocks to use to basking & viewing prey or territorial defense

**Sagebrush:** small as adults, smaller scales. Lack solid blue throat patch, have no yellow on backs of hind limbs, no keeled scales on back of thighs. Can be orange/rust under armpits. Habitat: Sand dunes and sandy habitats with Shrubs and large areas of bare ground.

***Sceloporus graciosus* Sagebrush lizard** Key ID features: appear gray or brown with stripes running head onto tail; belly is white. During spring breeding, female have orange on sides of head and body.

Habitat: Sand dunes and sandy habitats with shrubs and large areas of bare ground.



Typically, armpits orange or rust colored

Dorsal scales small, not granular, free posterior edge



scales **not** keeled on back of thigh



males- blue-to-black patches on sides of abdomen & mottled blue on throat



All photos:  
John  
Sullivan  
-thanks!  
[wildherps.com](http://wildherps.com)

***Elgaria coerulea* Northern alligator lizard** Key ID features: small, slim gray-brown lizard with keeled scales, short legs, and a long tail (easily shed when threatened). Color: dark brown to greenish. Young have a coppery dorsal stripe.

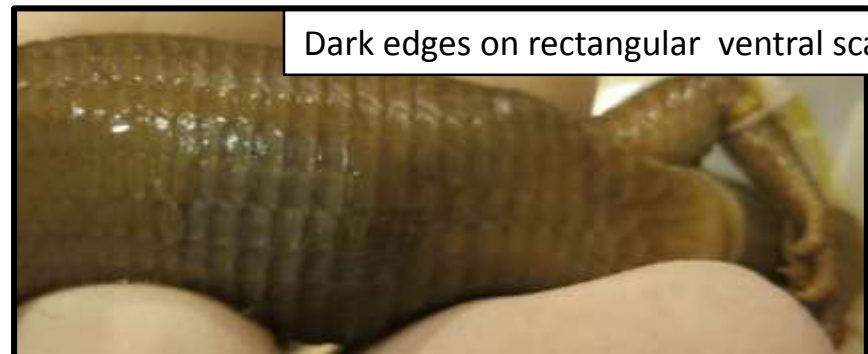
Size: up to 10 inches total length



**Defining feature:** longitudinal fold on each side of body with an area of very small scales separating dorsal and ventral rectangle-shaped scales.



Brown eyes



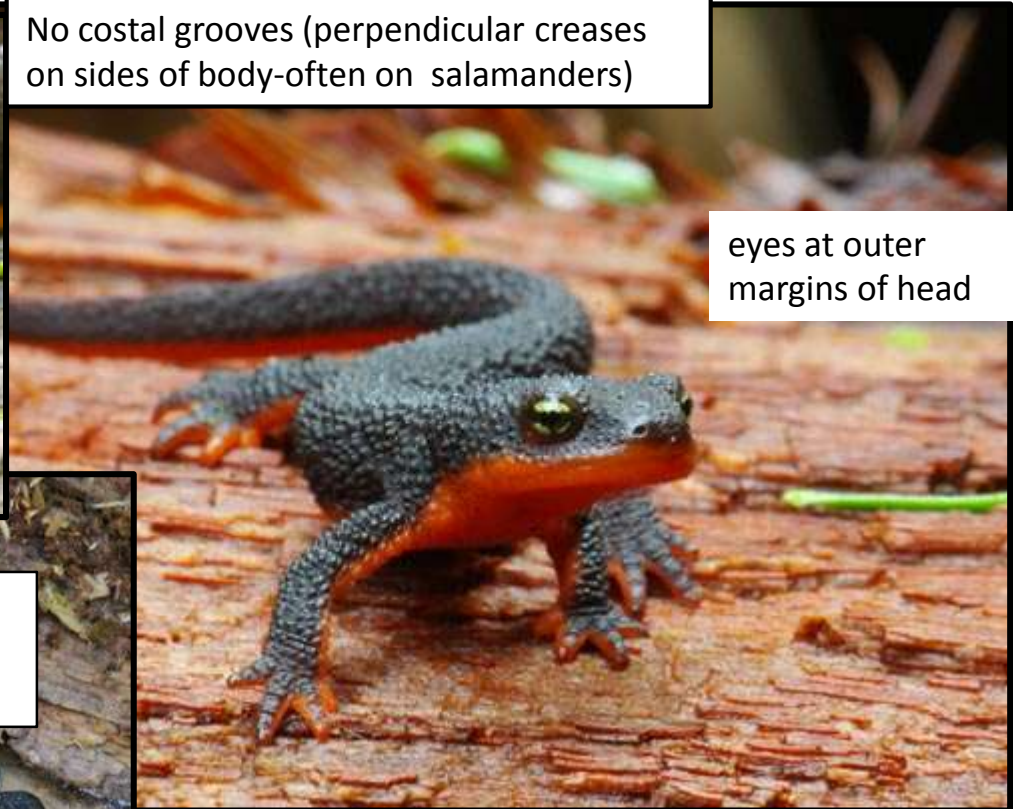
Dark edges on rectangular ventral scales

***Taricha granulosa* Rough-skinned newt** Key ID features: Color: brown to reddish above and bright orange below. Skin glands produce poisonous toxin that serves as defense against predators (only valley garter snake can prey on it)



rounded snout

No costal grooves (perpendicular creases on sides of body-often on salamanders)



eyes at outer margins of head

Defensive posture- arches head toward tail, showing orange belly, signally toxicity to possible predators



rough granular skin

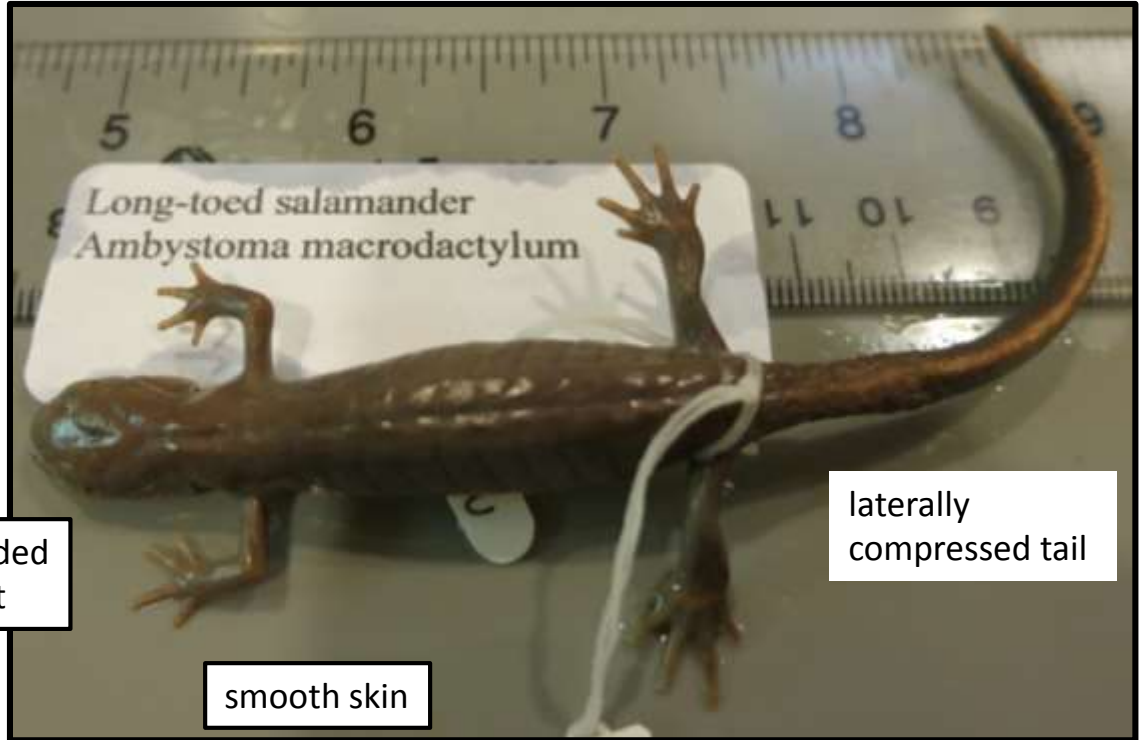
All photos: John Sullivan  
-thanks! John Sullivan wildherps.com

Habitat: forests with moderate temperatures and moist ground. Active both day and night. Breed in ponds, wetlands, slow-moving creeks.

**Ambystoma macrodactylum** Long-toed salamander Key ID features: Green-yellow dorsal stripe from head-back-to-ridge of tail. Sides, abdomen, & chest have blue, silver, or white flecks. Most widespread salamander in WA in wide variety of habitats, yet seldom seen (mostly underground).



Very long  
4<sup>th</sup> toe,  
hind foot



rounded  
snout

smooth skin

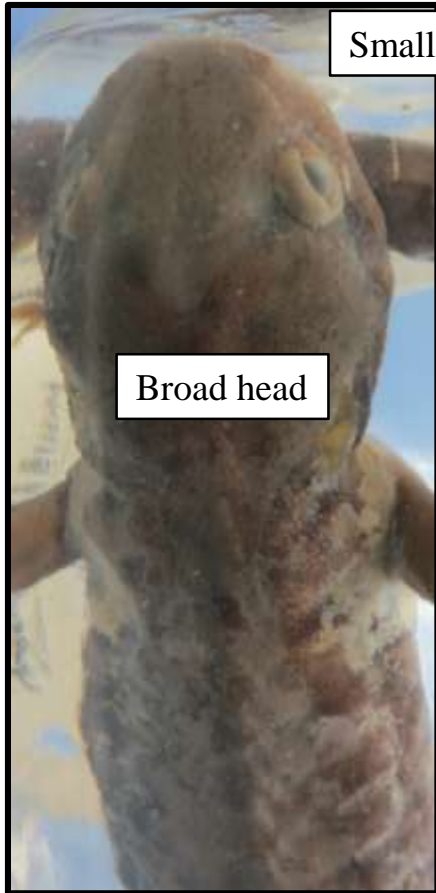
laterally  
compressed tail



distinct costal grooves

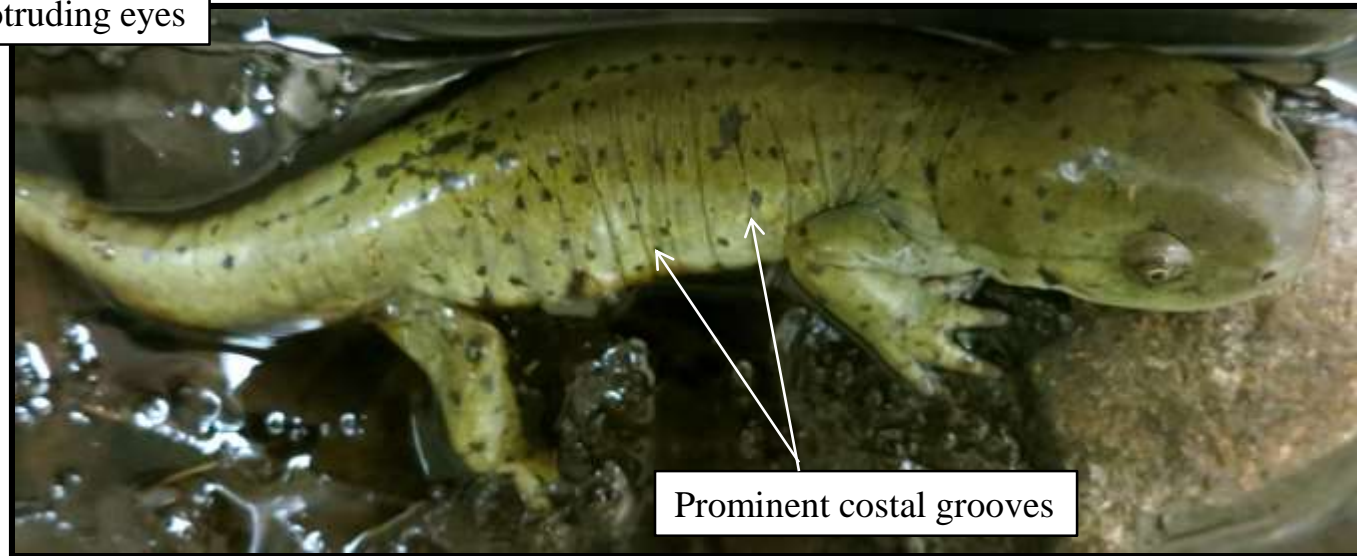


*Ambystoma tigrinum* **Tiger salamander ADULT**- One of the largest species of salamanders-heavy bodied. Habitat: shrub-steppe and grasslands, breeding in warm ponds or shallow lakes (eggs laid in water less than 1 meter deep).



Small protruding eyes

Broad head



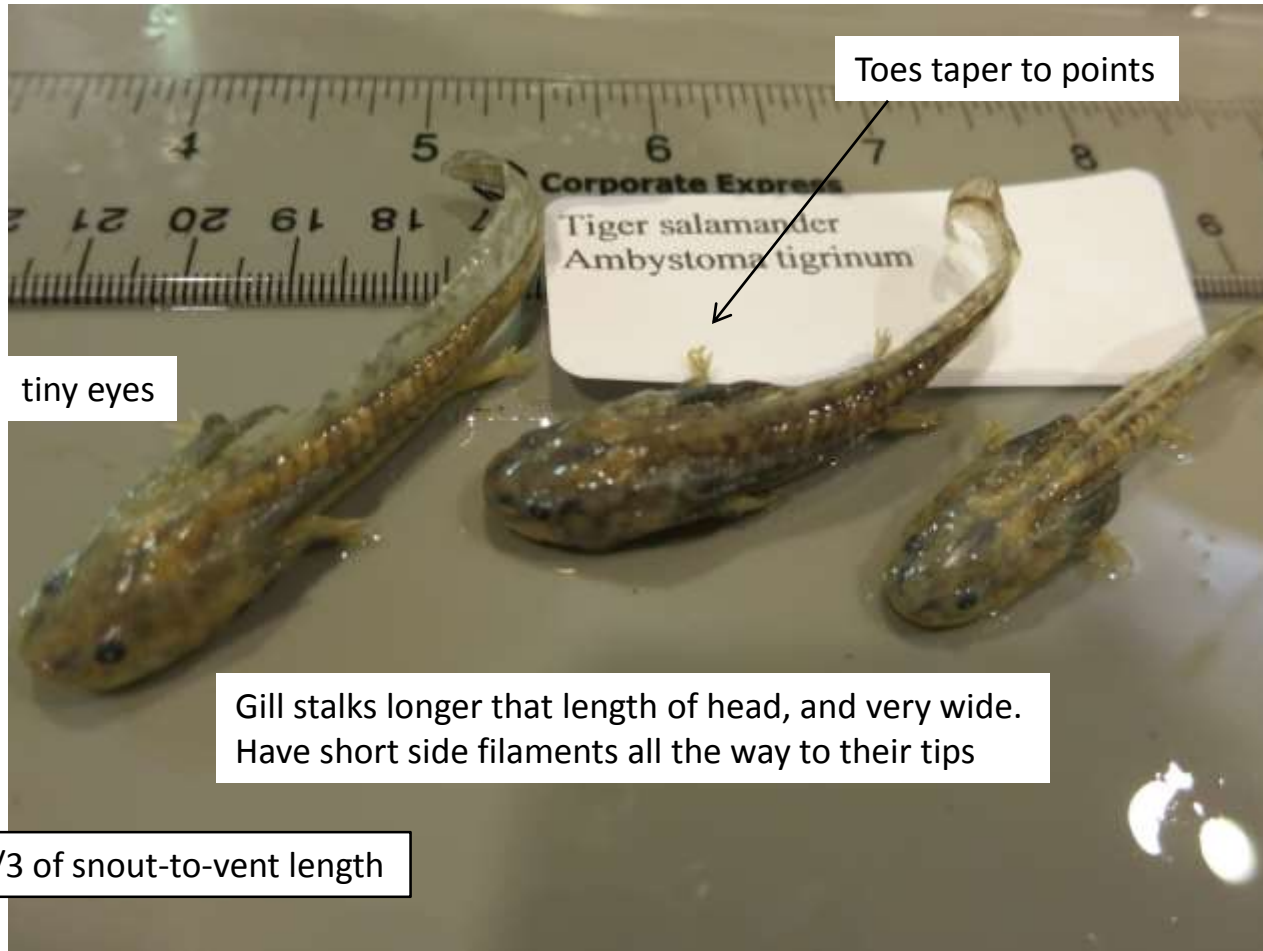
Prominent costal grooves

**Adult body color** Dorsal: olive or pale yellow spots, bars or blotches with indistinct borders between a network of black markings. Ventral: gray chest and body

2 prominent tubercles (hardened rounded bump) on each hind foot.

Adult total length (snout to tip of tail can reach 6-1/2 inches)

***Ambystoma tigrinum* Tiger salamander LARVA and Neotenic adults** (sexually mature, but retain larva features of gills and fins) Neotenic adults are common in permanent water habitats.



Toes taper to points

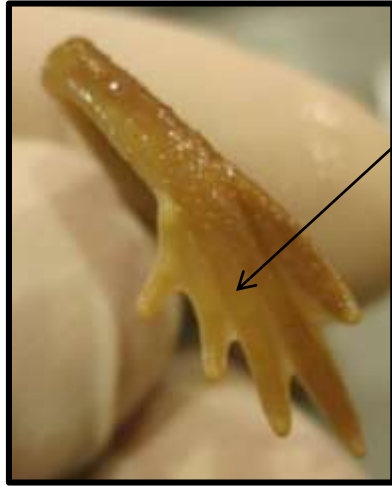
Tiger salamander  
*Ambystoma tigrinum*

tiny eyes

Gill stalks longer than length of head, and very wide.  
Have short side filaments all the way to their tips

Large head: 1/3 of snout-to-vent length

***Ascaphus truei* Coastal Tailed frog** Key ID Features: moderately small, slender frog with rough skin. Habitat: fast, cold, rocky forest streams with cobble substrate and little silt. Tail-like copulatory organ on male only. Eye stripe from snout to shoulder.



Outer toes on hind foot are slightly webbed, flat & wide, especially 5<sup>th</sup> toe

Adult length:  
female 2 inches;  
males 1.75 inches  
(excludes tail)



Head: relatively large, flattened & slightly broader than long

Vertical pupil



Photos: John Sullivan wildherps.com

***Rana luteiventris* Columbia spotted frog** Key ID features. Chiefly aquatic, near a permanent water body. Associated with non-woody wetland plants like grasses, sedges, & rushes. Color: dorsal- beige or olive-brown to brick red with black spots (ragged edges, light centers)



Dorsal spots- irregularly shaped, ragged edges and light centers

Eyes oriented upward at 45 degree angle

Length: 3-4 inches



Orange to red color on underside of legs & abdomen edges (on adults, absent in small juveniles)



Toes nearly fully webbed



***Rana cascadae* Cascades Frog:** Color: Dorsal- tan, copper, or olive green and covered with black spots with crisp edges. Ventral-honey yellow abdomen & legs. Eye mask. Habitat: high elevation (>2000 ft.) near standing or flowing water.

Eyes oriented outward so only a part of the pupil is visible viewed from above



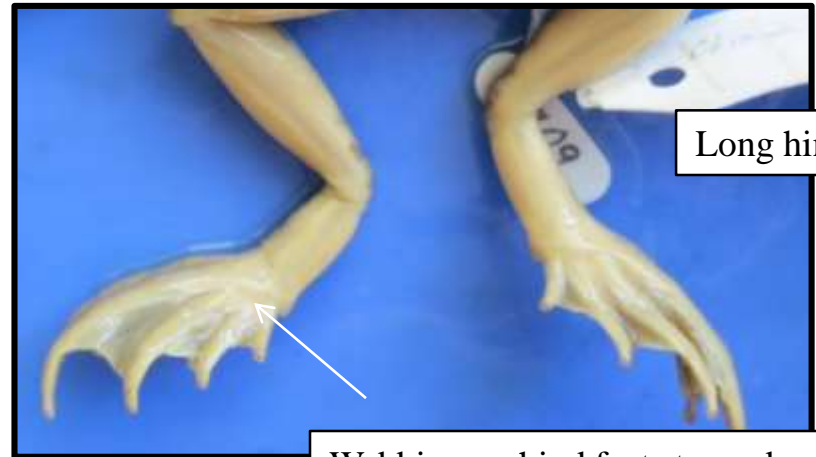
Distinct dorsal lateral fold, head to hip



Crisp-edged rounded or angular inky black spots

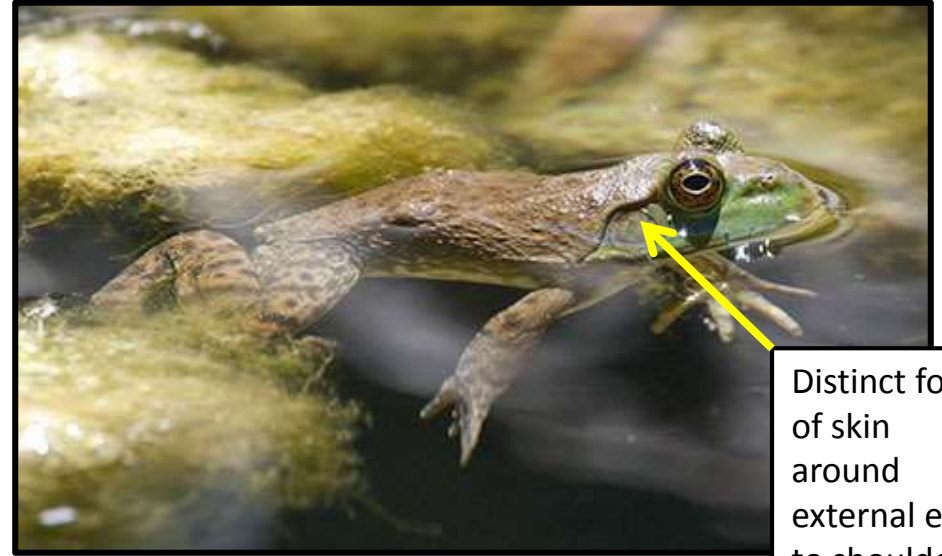


Long hind legs



Webbing on hind feet stepped down on inner edges of toes

***Rana catesbeiana* Bullfrog (non-native)** Key ID features: Color: Dorsal-tan, brown, or olive brown with dark mottling & speckling. Full size is 2x larger than any native WA frog



Distinct fold of skin around external ear to shoulder

Color: pale green to dark olive, with spots and blotches.

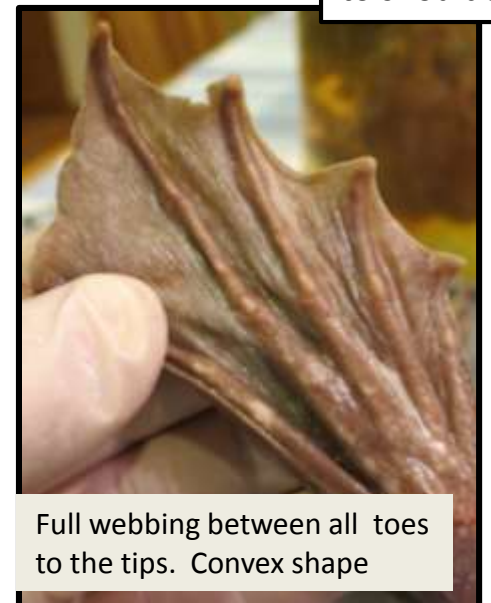
Males-7-1/8 inch length  
Females- 7-7/8 inch length

Introduced from Eastern U.S.. In WA, common along freshwater shorelines. Has resulted in declines of spotted frogs, N. leopard frogs, & western pond turtles.



No eye mask

Photos: John Sullivan <http://www.wildherps.com/>



Full webbing between all toes to the tips. Convex shape