



Blk. Mt. News, 30 July 1981

Colorado River toad stocking up

An interesting inhabitant of our Desert Foothills is the Colorado River toad, *Bufo alvaris*. It is easily recognized by its large size, as the body length of an adult may be as much as 6 inches. This is the largest western toad.

Its dark-brown or olive-green skin is fairly smooth except on the hind legs which have several large warts. The so-called warts on a toad are glands. The Colorado River toad has exceptionally large parotoid glands and cranial crests. The cranial crests partially surround the eyes and the parotoids lie in back of the cranial crests.

There are also enlarged whitish warts near the angle of the jaw. These glands or warts contain a sticky white fluid which can paralyze or even kill dogs or any other

animals that might try to eat the toad. Dogs are more apt to just worry or play with the toads but if a dog takes the toad in its mouth, it may get enough poison to be dangerous.

The eyes of the genus *Bufo* have horizontal pupils while the small spadefoot toads, *Scaphiopus* sp., frequently seen in this area, have vertical pupils in their eyes. Another interesting difference between these two genera of toads is that the Colorado River toad has no teeth but the little spadefoot has teeth in the upper jaw. The spadefoot toad has cranial crests but no parotoid glands and his skin may have tubercles but no warts. They are also distinguished by a single black sharp-edged projection, the spade, of each hind foot.

The Colorado River toad usually comes out of hibernation some time in June and is active until September. The toad must prepare for such a long hibernation by storing much fat for which it must consume large numbers of insects. Since most kinds of toads cannot live in our dry climate, we should doubly welcome those that are adapted to surviving here.

So welcome them to your plantings and birdbath even though it does mean more frequent changing of the water in the bath. If your bird bath is above ground level, a shallow container of some type lowered into the ground and kept full of water can take the place of a bird bath.

for hibernation