

Common Spadefoot Toad (*Neobatrachus sudelli*)



Pupils: Vertical



Toes: Toe pads absent, minimal to half webbing.



Eggs: Floating jelly chains, around vegetation.



■ Range

□ North Central Region



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Other common names: Painted Burrowing Frog, Meowing Frog, Sudell's Frog, Eastern Metal-eyed Frog.

Adult description: The Common Spadefoot Toad is actually a frog (no true native toads exist in Australia). It is a burrowing frog and remains buried for much of the time, becoming active after rain. It is identifiable by its vertical pupil and fully webbed toes, used for digging and propulsion in the water. Its skin colour is highly variable; from blotchy grey to dark brown above, with numerous warts. There may be a pale stripe down the back, and the belly is white. The skin in the groin area is loose and extends from the side of the body to the knees like "baggy pants". It grows to approximately 40 mm.

Calling: Males will call for a mate whilst floating in open water. The call is a slowly pulsed musical trill 'craa-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-awk'.

Breeding: During the mating season, males develop black spines on the back.

Eggs & tadpoles: Up to 1,000 pigmented eggs are laid in long strands contained within jelly. Eggs are found in ponds, dams, ditches, and flooded claypans after heavy rain. Strands may be wrapped around submerged vegetation when present. Tadpoles are silvery grey, the fins are clear and sometimes have dark flecks. They feed on the bottom of the dam or pond, on a variety of matter including insects and other dead tadpoles.

Habitat: The adult Common Spadefoot Toad is most often found in dry habitats, including woodlands and grassland areas, mallee, open, and disturbed areas, beneath soil, rocks and fallen timber. They seek water in which to breed and lay eggs.

Conservation status & threats: Non-threatened. Potential threats include a decline in water quality, habitat disturbance, cats, foxes, herbicide and pesticide use and the Chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium*).

Interesting facts and features: The adult Common Spadefoot Toad may be found wandering on moist nights, some distance from the nearest permanent water. May be confused with the Mallee Spadefoot Toad (*Neobatrachus pictus*), although this species is not common in North Central Victoria. Can be distinguished by its 'baggy pants' and by warts on the back – low and smoothly rounded in *N. sudelli*, raised and horny-capped in the *N. pictus*.

