

Dwarf Surinam Toad

Scientific Name: *Pipa Parva*

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Family: Pipidae



The head is narrow, with large eyes, and the snout is pointed. The tongue is lacking and the upper lip has a labial pocket at the angle of the jaw. They do not have any teeth. The skin is covered with small tubercles of varying size, density, and definition. The skull is longer than it is wide, and relatively elongated compared to other pipid species, though still possessing the characteristic wedge shape. These frogs have a uniform dark brown coloration on the head, back, limbs and associated tubercles. Ventrally, the dark brown fades into a light gray/tan and may be unspotted or have sparse indistinct spots on the pectoral region. While the feet have the same coloration, the webbing between the fingers and toes is completely transparent. The mouth structure is about half the head width and is terminal,

slightly toward the ventral side of the head. The skull and jaws are largely composed of embryonic cartilage and are long, broad and flat. Tadpoles are dark gray brown dorsally, with transparent ventral surfaces.

Range

Venezuela and northeastern Colombia.

Habitat

Prefers lakes, ponds, and marshes especially flat, open areas.

Gestation

Incubation 30
days

Behavior

This toad spends most of its life in water. It is an active, strong swimmer. As it swims, it holds its forelimbs out in front of its head. Each forelimb has four thread-like fingers, and each finger has a cluster of glandular filaments on the ends which are extremely sensitive to touch. These are used as sensory probes for food. It also uses these fingers to sift through mud for food when the water is too clouded with silt to see very well. The Surinam toad does not hibernate, is difficult to breed in captivity. It has been known to make metallic clicking calls.

Reproduction

The most extraordinary thing about this animal is the mating ritual. A male will clasp a female from the back, pressing her extended cloaca onto her back, and stimulating the skin on her back to swell. They will then somersault through the water (still clasped together), rising toward the surface. As they flip over, the female will lay 3 to 10 eggs, which will fall against the males' belly. The eggs undergo metamorphosis while still in the pockets. The tadpoles' tails act much like placentas, exchanging nutrients and gases between the mother and tadpole. Two to four months later the mother will molt, opening the egg pits on her back. The toads will then hatch into fully formed miniature toads.

Wild Diet

Worms, insects, crustaceans and fish.