

**THEY'RE (ALMOST) EVERYWHERE:
MOVEMENT PATTERNS AND HABITAT USE IN BOREAL TOADS IN
WESTERN MONTANA BASINS^{AFS}**

Michael K. Young
USDA Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Research Station
P.O. Box 8089, Missoula, MT 59807
mkyoung@fs.fed.us

David A. Schmetterling
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula, Montana 59804
dschmett@bigsky.net

The boreal toad (*Bufo boreas*) is widely distributed in western North America, but it has declined precipitously in the southern Rocky Mountains and may be declining in western Montana. Previous studies indicated that adult boreal toads were sedentary, and typically occupied summer habitats far from water. We devised a new method for detecting the presence of toads using upstream-facing hoop nets in two drainages in June 2003. In July-August 2003 in two streams, we conducted a more intensive study of in-channel movements using hoop nets and PIT tags and of overall movements and habitat use using radio telemetry. In 17 streams in the Blackfoot and Bitterroot river basins, we captured 83 boreal toads at 13 sites in 8 streams. Intensive trapping in Slate and Little Blue Joint creeks in the Bitterroot River basin produced 514 captures of 117 adult and 203 juvenile toads. Juveniles dominated catches initially but declined throughout summer, whereas adult catches were unrelated to season. Of the 125 PIT-tagged toads, two-thirds were recaptured 1-7 times in hoop nets and the median total distance moved was over 1 km. The median total distance moved by radio-tagged toads was over 2 km, but up to 12 km. Only 17 percent of relocations of radio-tagged toads were at upland sites; 62 percent were in riparian zones and 21 percent were in or adjacent to water. We believe that hoop nets are effective for monitoring the presence of boreal toads and that boreal toad life histories may be far more aquatically oriented than previously recognized.