

Oriental Fire-Bellied Toad

Bombina orientalis

Phylum: Chordata **Class:** Amphibia **Order:** Anura **Family:** Bombinatoridae

Habitat: In the wild Fire-Bellied toads inhabit temperate forests, specifically in and around stagnant or slow moving waterways such as lakes, ponds, streams, swampy brush land and even flooded ditches and culverts. This species often hunts on land, and retreats to water when startled or threatened.

Diet: As obligate predators these toads consume a wide variety of small hard or soft shelled insects (crickets, wax worms, mealworms etc.) as well as other arthropods, and will occasionally prey on small fish or tadpoles. These animals have a high metabolism and will eat regularly, therefore it is important to feed them often. A single toad may consume three to five appropriately sized insects five times a week; however as with most amphibians short periods (several days) without food will not place your toad at risk as long as the animal is healthy. Some hobbyists supplement their toads with gut loaded crickets two to three times a week. This is very important for females who have been exposed to cooling cycles and may begin developing eggs.

Behavior: This small species of semi-aquatic toad is a diurnal animal and is most active during daylight hours. If given a large enough area of water or container of water they will spend long periods of time floating, especially if there is an abundance of cover or floating aquatic plants. Males can be aggressive towards one another, but usually only if they have been exposed to cooler temperatures and then warmed up, this type of temperature fluctuation can trigger breeding behavior for this species. It is not uncommon for males to attempt amplexus (he will appear to grasp and wrestle with other toads) at all times of the year, this is not harmful and unreceptive females or other males that have been grasped in error will emit a high pitched release call. Males who are comfortable in captivity will also regularly call (especially in morning and evening hours) this vocalization sounds like a muted or distant dog barking. The call is fairly quiet because this species lacks the external vocal sac(s) that many other frog and toad species use to amplify their call.

Anatomical Characteristics: The Fire-Bellied toad is aptly named due to the bright red markings on the underside of the animal's body. Occasionally if startled or cornered the toad may display these bright colors by engaging what is referred to as the 'unken reflex' by which the toad arches its back and raises its head and front legs upwards to warn would be predators of their toxicity. As with all species of toads Fire-Belly's possess a pair of parotid glands located behind their eyes, these glands are capable of secreting a toxin that if ingested or rubbed into open wounds or eyes can cause great discomfort. Therefore it is important to limit any handling (they don't like it anyways) and always wash your hands after working in their enclosure or contacting the toads. Like all amphibians the skin of Fire-Bellied toads is a semi-permeable

membrane, thus allowing them to absorb and lose moisture through their skin. If kept in an overly dry environment they can become quickly lethargic and dehydrated, it is also possible for them to absorb dangerous chemicals through their skin. Always be mindful of any cleaning chemicals used around the toad's habitat; also be wary of cleaning chemicals, lotions, disinfectants, and soaps that may be present on your hands when cleaning the enclosure or moving the animals. It's a good rule of thumb to always wash your hands before and after working with any animal.

Housing: There are literally hundreds of housing options commercially available to hobbyists wishing to keep Fire-Bellied toads. Glass, acrylic, and plastic tanks work well, as do specialized reptile/amphibian enclosures. Overcrowding can become an issue if too many toads are kept in a small enclosure, mostly because of water quality and competition for food. Two to four toads can be housed comfortably in a ten gallon aquarium, the larger the enclosure the more animals could be safely and happily kept. If a reservoir (bowl or other container) is provided as a water/swimming source then it should be changed every few days to insure good water quality. If a section of the habitat is converted to a pool then weekly water changes should be performed for the same reasons. If filtration or water agitation is desired numerous low water level pumps and powerheads exist for such application. Fire-Bellies are hardy toads and can easily be kept in either sterile or naturalistic planted settings, if opting for naturalistic settings know what you're putting into the environment, make sure it is safe for the toads. If using plants insure that the species chosen will do well in similar environments as the toads and that the plants themselves are also hardy as they will be crawled amongst, hopped on, and trampled through by the Fire-Bellies. Always keep the enclosure securely lidded as the toads can easily climb most surfaces.



Distribution: Northeastern China, North and South Korea, and southwestern regions of Russia.

Lifespan: Up to 20 years in captivity. **Adult Size:** 1.5-2.5"

Temperatures: Daytime gradient 68-75 degrees Fahrenheit, basking spots no higher than 80 degrees and nighttime cools dropping no lower than 60 degrees unless the animals are intentionally being cooled to promote captive propagation.