

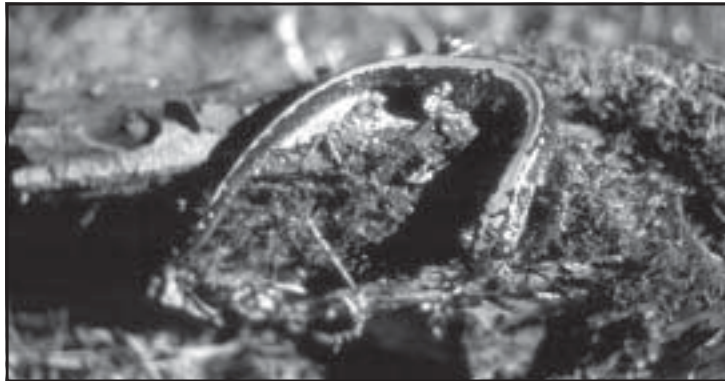
# 11. Reptiles and Amphibians

## Indicators of a Clean Environment

The Crown of the Continent's climate makes it a difficult place for cold-blooded creatures to survive. The number of herptile species in the Crown of the Continent is quite small. Glacier National Park, for example, includes only one salamander species, three frogs, and one toad on its list of amphibians. But the reptiles and amphibians that do live in the Crown deserve a closer look.

The tailed frog is one of the most primitive frogs of the world. It lives in clean, fast-running streams, particularly in the mountains of the Crown of the Continent. Its tadpoles develop a suction cup on their mouths, to hold to rocks in fast current. Unlike most frogs, the tailed does not sing to declare a territory or attract mates. In fact, it has no ears at all. The tailed frog's only close relative lives in New Zealand, nearly 8,000 miles away on the other side of the earth.

Other amphibians include the spotted frog, the pacific chorus frog, and the western



leopard frog. The Crown of the Continent is also habitat for the western toad and the long-toed salamander.

Reptiles of the Crown of the Continent include the western, Great Plains, and common garter snakes, as well as

the rubber boa. Western rattlesnakes exist on the prairie adjacent to



the Rocky Mountain Front and in the Mission Valley and National Bison Range. The painted turtle is common in wetlands, slower rivers, and ponds in some portions of the Crown of the Continent, such as the Flathead River and associated sloughs.

### Issues in Conserving Herptiles

Throughout the world, experts are increasingly concerned about amphibians, as species seem to be dwindling and disappearing at an unusually fast rate.

Biologists at Waterton Lakes National Park consider the long-toed salamander an indicator species. That is, its presence gives clues about the cleanliness of the water and the overall health of the standing water and shoreline habitat. If the salamander disappears from a given body of water, that's a warning sign for park managers to look for problems.

Because amphibians breathe through their skin, they are particularly sensitive to water pollution and increased ultraviolet radiation caused by ozone depletion. They are also sensitive to habitat fragmentation and

competition from exotic species. Since wilderness waters are relatively free of habitat fragmentation and pollution, they can be important laboratories for testing the effects of ozone depletion, or other global problems.



## Sources

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