

Hoosier Herpetological Society

Reptile and Amphibian buyer's guide

As a service to our members and anyone who might be considering purchasing a reptile or amphibian for the first time, we offer a guide.

This guide will give you an idea of good reptile/amphibians for the beginner and others that are best to avoid.

Please think before deciding upon a reptile for a pet. Many reptiles live much longer than mammals and you should be committed to the proper care and health for the lifetime of the animal.

Avoid "wild-caught" animals as pets. Many of these animals are often stressed in captivity and may not survive to captive conditions. They also may carry disease and parasites. Wild animals should be left in their natural habitats.

TURTLES AND TORTOISES

Tortoises and turtles to avoid

Box turtles are protected in Indiana since 2004 and cannot be collected, sold or kept legally as pets.

Sulcata tortoises (African spur-thigh tortoise)

These are cute as hatchlings but will soon grow to enormous sizes. They require a large escape proof pen (indoors and outdoors) eat a huge amount of food and they burrow quite well. A very long lifespan is also another problem with tortoises. Some may live over 100 years. They are difficult to re-home because of these problems.

Aquatic turtles (Red-eared sliders)

It can be very challenging to meet the housing and environmental needs of most aquatic turtles. Again they are cute as youngsters but kids will become bored with them and that leaves the adults to care for them. Deciding to get a turtle requires a great deal of preparation and commitment. Daily care is a must. These turtles eat and defecate in the same water that they live in. Having said this, there is the possibility of harboring Salmonella.

Better choices

Russian tortoise, Greek tortoise, or Red-foot tortoise

These species are smaller in size, are affordable and hardy. But they still require **daily** care (proper diet, vitamins, heat and lighting).

Photos by Jim Horton unless otherwise stated



Russian tortoise

Photo - Google images



Greek tortoise

Photo – Google images



Redfoot Tortoise

LIZARDS

Lizards to avoid

Green Iguanas

It is not advised to purchase green iguanas. Iguanas may be difficult to grow to adults. They require the correct lighting, heat, humidity, vitamins and daily care requiring large enclosures. They are prone to several medical conditions such as Metabolic bone disease. Many adults don't take well to captivity and some will become aggressive.

Large monitors

Monitors are quick to grow and soon require large enclosures with daily care. They eat a large amount of food items. Many defecate in their water bowls daily and need constant attention.

Crocodilians

It is not advised to purchase alligators or crocodiles. These are dangerous animals and require the owner to obtain permits from local government agencies. Again they will require large aquatic/terrestrial enclosures and eat often and this becomes very expensive.

Chameleons

Even captive-bred ones combine some of the most difficult challenges for any pet: an anti-social nature, inability to tolerate handling and sensitivity to stress. Feeding and housing chameleons is very demanding and challenging: they need to be housed alone, well away from other chameleons, and struggle to cope with the stresses of a normal household such as pets, household appliances and even passing foot traffic.

Better choices

Leopard geckos, Crested geckos, Bearded dragons

These lizards are a good choice for a beginner. They are smaller in size and consume insects and some take vegetation. They are readily available on the market with wide varieties to choose from. They are also quite affordable. They are all easy to handle and make wonderful captives.



Bearded Dragon

Photo – Google Images



Crested Gecko



Leopard Gecko

Photo – Google Images

SNAKES

Snakes to avoid

Burmese, African Rock and Reticulated pythons, Anacondas

These snakes are small as hatchlings but will grow to very large sizes. As adults, they require very large enclosures and feed on large rats and rabbits. This is costly to many keepers. They may also be dangerous to small children. Many communities require permits to keep large Boids. Zoos will not take them and they are not easy to re-home.

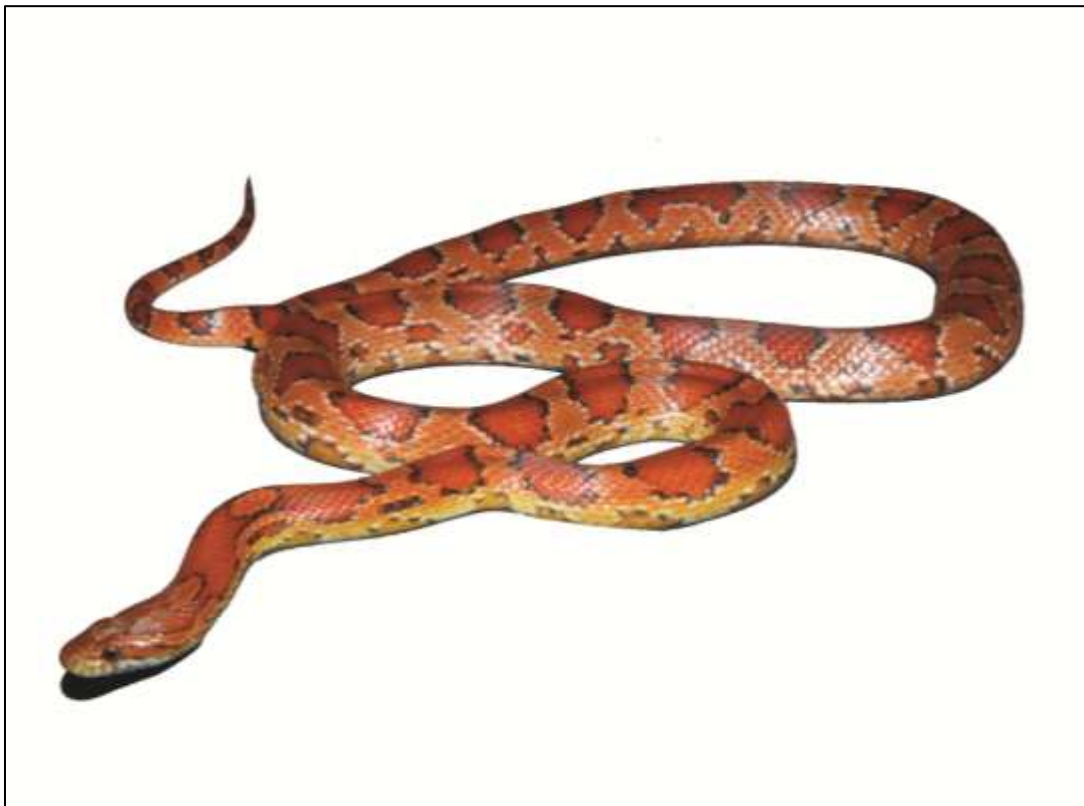
Better choices

Ball python, Corn snake, Kingsnake, Sand boas, small Island boas

These are manageable in size (rarely over 4 feet), affordable, eat smaller prey items, and there are beautiful individuals to choose from.



Young Corn snake



Adult Corn snake



California Kingsnake

Photo – Gary Nafis



Arizona Mountain Kingsnake



Kenyan Sand Boa



Ball Python

Photo – Google Images



Hogg Island Boa

Photo – Pat Hammond

AMPHIBIANS

When and if handling amphibians be sure your hands are clean (soap and chemical free) and damp or wet. Otherwise, it is best to avoid handling Amphibians!

Amphibians to avoid

Exotic frogs such as Red-eye tree frogs

Many are wild-caught and stressed, require higher temperatures and humidity and don't adjust well to captivity. There is also the threat of disease such as Chytrid and parasites.

Better choices

Tiger salamanders, Fire salamanders

These species are large, hardy, and will eat many prey items

Oriental Fire Bellied Toads

Semi-terrestrial frogs that are fairly active and relatively easy to keep as pets.

White's Tree Frog

Terrestrial (tree frogs) that are docile and easy to keep, but they do tend to be fairly inactive.

American Green and Grey Tree Frogs

Another good tree frog suitable for beginners.

American toads

Toads are easy to care for and do well in captivity.

Pacman Frogs

Mostly terrestrial frogs which are pretty easy to care for, but get quite large, have teeth and may bite.



Firebelly Toad

Photo – National Geographic



White's Treefrog

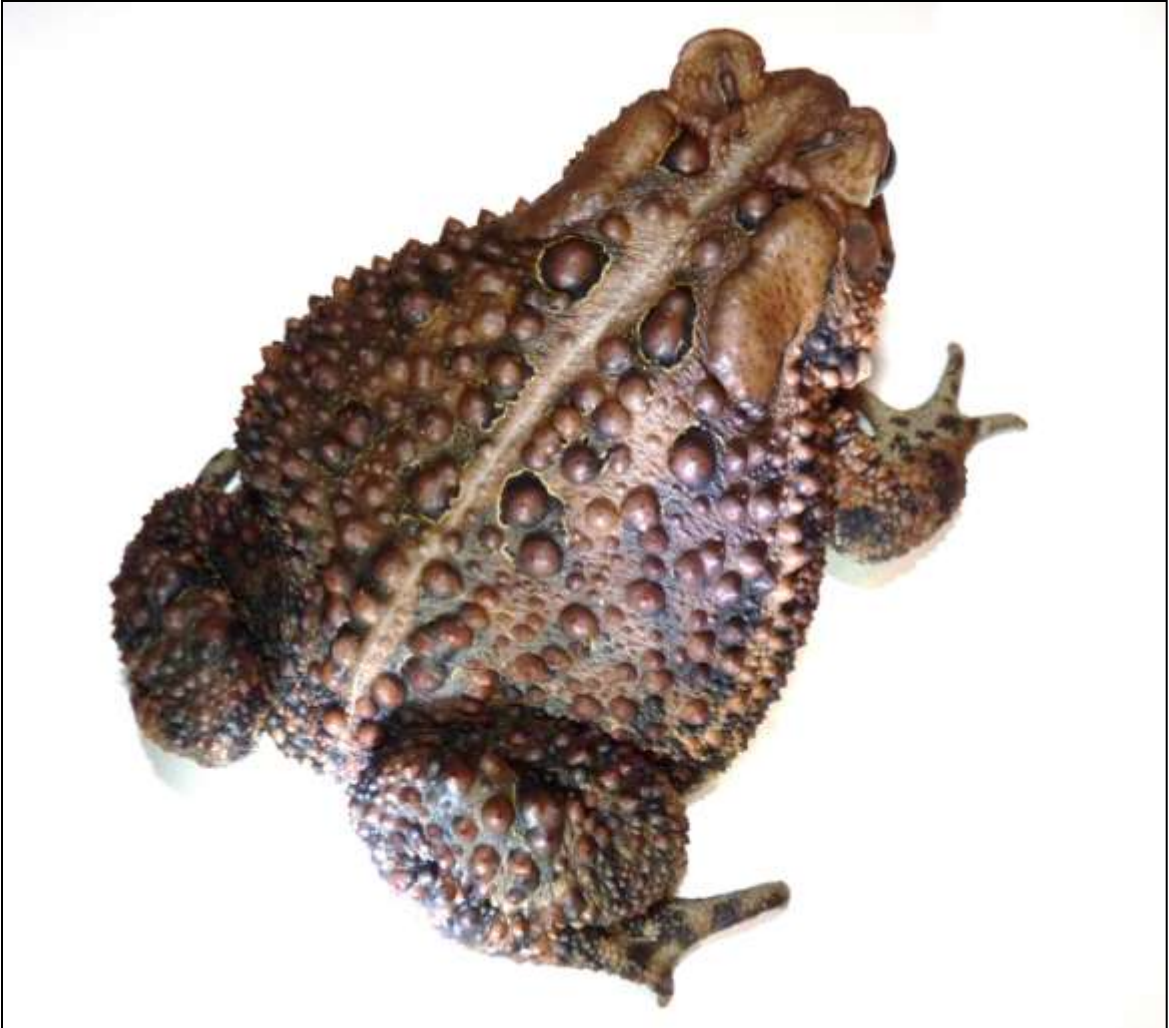
photo-aquariumofpacific.org



Tiger Salamander



Green Treefrog



American Toad