



Yellow toads ready  
for the ladies...



...but their breeding  
finery doesn't last long.

# Tinted toads

The first known case of extreme colour change in a toad.

For males of the yellow toad *Bufo luettkenii*, which is found in Pacific lowlands throughout most of Central America, finding a mate can make you dull.

When studying these toads in north-west Costa Rica, Stéphanie Doucet and Daniel Mennill from

the University of Windsor, Canada, found that males burst into a bright yellow colour with the first heavy rains of the year, which coincided with the onset of the mating season. However, as soon as a toad won over and embraced a female, he began to lose his flair, turning a boring mud-brown hue within a few hours. It's the first report of such rapid, dynamic colour change in an amphibian.

Since these toads breed in large, lek-like groups, the stunt is likely to

be a social signal, though what is being communicated to whom is unknown. Indeed, when the researchers kept some of the brightest beaus from the action, they, too, lost their visual panache. When returned to the pond, they quickly got their groove back.

The skill may also be an adaptation against predation. After mating, it probably pays to shed the snappy suit as soon as possible to avoid the unwelcome attention of hungry passers-by.

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