Adaptations of the American Toad

Adaptation in a population of living things happens as a result of an adaptive trait. This is any inheritable trait that increases its survival rate so that it can live longer, reproduce longer, and have more offspring (that also have that trait). Adaptive traits can improve animals find food, make a safer home, escape predators, survive cold or heat or lack of water.

Toads are well adapted for life on land, with thicker, more protective skin than most frogs. Their slightly webbed back feet help them dig into the soil to protect them in colder temperatures. Because they spend their lives on land they are less vulnerable to droughts, thought they must have water for mating and laying their eggs. All of these physical adaptations help the toad survive in its habitat.

They are protected from predators by special glands that ooze toxins out onto their skin when they are threatened. Toads have been known to fill themselves up with air to appear larger and more difficult to swallow to predators. This behavioral adaptation caused a stir in Europe in 2005, when a flock of crows discovered that they could pop the toads with their beaks and eat their livers. Within a few days more than a 1,000 exploded toads were found in Germany and Denmark. This adaptive trait was suddenly not a protective adaptations any longer.
For Discussion and Critical Thinking:

The American toad has adaptive traits that help it to survive in its habitat.

1. Name two of the American toad’s physical adaptations and how they help it survive:

   1. __________________________________________________________________________________
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   2. __________________________________________________________________________________
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2. Name two of the American toad’s behavioral adaptations and how they help it survive predators and cold weather:

   1. __________________________________________________________________________________
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   2. __________________________________________________________________________________
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3. Why can the American toad survive droughts better than frogs?

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