

Episode Twenty Six: Cane Toad | Week of October 4th

[SPOOKY COVER OF *HOP* BY [BOQEH](#) PLAYS THROUGHOUT]

KIM

Double, double, toil and trouble. It's Octoadber 4th, 2021, I'm Kim, and the toad of the week is the Cane Toad.

This toad is native to South and Central America, but it has been introduced to many other regions to control pests, particularly in agricultural areas.

The Cane Toad is quite large- females may grow to be over 9 inches long, while males may be up to 6 inches long. They have dry, warty skin, which may be gray, yellowish, reddish-brown, or olive-brown, with varying patterns.

This is a very old species. Scientists identified a fossilized toad from at least 12 million years ago that is indistinguishable from the Cane Toad. How did the Cane Toad do it? Maybe she's born with it, maybe it's poison.

When threatened, the Cane Toad secretes bufotoxin, which literally means "toad toxin," from the skin. This secretion is toxic to many animals when ingested and can even be fatal. That is one way to forge a 12-million-year legacy.

But the Cane Toad isn't just a fighter- it's also a lover and prolific breeder. Males attract mates with their deep, rolling call.

[CANE TOAD CALL PLAYS]

KIM

Each female may lay thousands of eggs in a single spawn. The tadpoles that hatch from those eggs will also be highly toxic if ingested by predators.

I have a complicated relationship with this toad, to be honest. Cane toads were a widespread invasive species where I grew up. Because they're dangerous to pets, we always had to be on the lookout for them when we let our dogs outside. Thankfully, we never had an incident, but it was enough to make me wary of these warty little guys.

Now that I know more about the Cane Toad, I'm willing to call a truce. This little toad appears to have survived 12 million years alongside crocodilians, poisonous snakes, and several mammals of the saber-toothed variety. If I were being hunted by crocodiles and snakes on a daily basis, I suppose I too would want to take whatever defensive measures I could against getting eaten.

And so, I like this toad, because it taught me the importance of perspective.

And that's the toad of the week. Our Twitter is @WeeklyFrogPod, and our website is frogpod.online.

Thanks for joining us. See you next week.

[SPOOKY COVER OF *HOP* BY [BOQEH](#) FADES OUT]