

Finding ESME

When you find it, you will know



FUN FACTS

The Horned Toad

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The horned toad has a special defense against predators. It can shoot a stream of blood from its eyes up to six feet!

Horned Toad Facts

You may be surprised to learn that horned toads—which are sometimes also called “horny toads” or “horned frogs”—aren’t toads at all!

Horned toads are actually lizards. Because of their round, flattened body and toad-like head, they’ve been given the scientific name *Phrynosoma*, which means “toad body.” Horned toads were once common in Texas, but their numbers have declined in recent decades. Habitat loss, pesticides, and fire ants may be to blame.

There is hope for their recovery. For the past 10 years, researchers from Texas zoos and Texas state parks have worked together to breed horned toads in captivity. In September 2018, Dallas Zoo released 139 hatchlings into the wild—93 of which came from Fort Worth Zoo’s breeding program. Fort Worth Zoo hopes to release 300 hatchlings in 2019.

Extra Fun Fact

Horned toads survive the winter by hibernating underground. They like to burrow about one to two inches under sand, and stay there from late October to late March. A few weeks after they emerge, breeding season begins and they look for a mate.

Discussion Questions

Why does Bump the horned toad give Esme so much comfort? Esme says, “I’d like to think somehow, some way, that’s where Paps was, behind the ancient eyes of that horned toad.” In some ways, Bump is Esme’s most constant and loyal friend. How is her friendship with Finch, her best friend, tested in the novel, and do you think Finch did the right thing?



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