

# THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC.

P.O. Box A2405 Sydney South NSW 2000

#### NEXT MEETING

\*\*\*Friday 3rd February\*\*\*7:00 for 7:30 pm\*\*\*Australian Museum



#### SPEAKERS

Shane Gow "Can't Stop Breeding Them" - or how to share your house with 3000 White-lipped TreeFrogs

You "My five favourite frog slides"



#### Current major FATS Group activities

## REGULAR FEATURES

News announcements	Discussions
Project updates	Informal atmosphere
No \$2 door donation for paid-up members	Fun
Refreshments	Visitors welcome

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## COMMITTEE (AND TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES)

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	FROGWEEK(scientific)	fax (08) 270 3280		
Lothar Voigt	Chairman, AAHS Councillor, FROGCALL ed.,			
	Public Officer, field trips contact	(02) 371 9129		
David Millar	Secretary	(02) 796 8526 (h)		
Martyn Robinson	Treasurer	(02) 339 8226		
Giselle Howard	FROGCALL ed., Membership Sec.	(02) 897 5066 (h)		
Peter Jones	FROGCALL ed., catering	(02) 621 5189 (h)		
Mark Wilson	FROGCALL ed.	(045) 721 583 (h)		
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Consultants to End	dangered Frog Survey:			
Michael Mahony		(049) 772 773 (h)		
Arthur White		(02) 599 1161 (h)		

Endangered Frog Survey

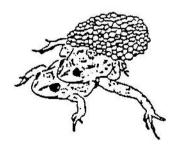
A study of the habitat characteristics, present distribution and population sizes of 21 species of "at risk" frogs in NSW. Partly funded through the National Estate Grant Program.

#### Frog Week

First week in November.

Many activities planned to focus public attention and interest in endangered frogs.

We anticipate considerable public involvement.



We hold six informative, informal, topical and practical meetings each year at the Australian Museum (William Street entrance) in Sydney. Meetings are held on the first Friday of every even month (February, April, June, August, October, December) at 7 for 7:30 pm. Visitors are welcome. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations and frog studies, and we produce a newsletter FROGCALL and the FROGFACTS information sheets.

## THE LAST MEETING (2.12.94)

Wolfgang Ochojski visited our shores, burdened with incredible slides from South Africa. We were given a treat by a top-class photographer of tree frog after tree frog and of reed frog after reed frog. Most had red legs and most go too dark in colour at night for a decent photo. Catching them in the dark is bad enough, with hippos flattening both frog and frogger alike (and with mosquitoes almost big enough to carry off the hippos). Really bad luck if you gave that evening a miss because you thought frog slides were things the frogs slide down on!

Geoffrey Smith from the Water Board's Streamwatch gave us an inspiring presentation on how the environmentally top schools are queuing up to join Streamwatch and fix their local wetlands. They monitor water quality, wildlife and habitats on an ongoing basis. He also gave us a glimpse of how they might assist with our programs like the Australian Frog Count and the Endangered Frog Survey.

By the time we had all convinced each other, we were too dizzy from Geoffrey's rapid-fire video clips designed to snap us awake despite the late hour.

The auction (the raffle tickets had got stuffed up so there was a shaggy dog auction), the auction fetched our Group \$55. For two styro spawnsaver boxes - one for floating, one grounded, a la Frogfacts No. 3 - plus marsh and water plants and a cricket starter culture. Well done, you reckless bidders! If you have anything to donate for next time, bring it in.

LV.

## YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Sadly, this is your last FROGCALL unless you're paid up. The next (March) issue would have informed you of Frog Decline and Viruses and of Frog Decline and UV Radiation and would have given you a care sheet for White-lipped Tree Frogs and also Frogfacts No. 6 - The Green-and-Golden Bell Frog. - But all is well: There is a subscription form at the end of this issue. Thank goodness!

#### A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

## Uncle Frog Needs You!

If you can help with the Endangered Frog Survey please ENLIST NOW :-

- 1. Phone Lothar Voigt on (02) 371 9129.
- 2. Be prepared to go on field work at short notice. We cannot plan ahead on the weather it rains irrespective of our civilised schedules, appointments and timetables. We could all benefit from being like frogs about the time!
- 3. The drought has made it hard to get survey results
- 4. But: The summer monsoonal weather is building up and we are getting good printing rain.
- 5. Be a survey group leader, a helper or a driver. Whatever you can do, we need you NOW.
- 6. Fuel costs for FATS Group field trips are refundable.

#### Harald Ehmann



Please contact the people listed below to join in on the frogging field trips they are planning. Several field trips announced in the last issue had to be cancelled because members may have been a bit shy about ringing up. Remember, you don't get an eco-holiday this cheap anywhere else (and the Endangered Frogs Survey won't get data sheets this cheap from anyone but you either).

The "date" for most field trips is TBA, not because indecision is the key to flexibility (that anyway) but because then you can all dash out when the weather turns. Ring your field trip leader(s) early and stay in phone contact. It's easy, just trust me.



Field Trip Leader	Phone	<u>Date</u>	Going to
3			
Gavin Ayre	(049) 430 095	TBA	Myall Lakes
Shane Gow	(02) 698 7641	TBA	Orimbah (brevies)
Philip Green	(043) 882 321	TBA	Watagans
Jacquie Recsci	(02) 476 2853	Sat/Su late Feb.	Shoalhaven
Lance Tarvey	(066) 283 897	TBA	Terania Creek basin (Mixo. fleyi)
Lothar Voigt	(02) 371 9129	Sat/Su 25.&26.3.	
Danny Wotherspoon	(047) 514 273	TBA	Bonnie Doon (Katoomba)
L.V.			(

## THE ENDANGERED FROG SURVEY - THE FINAL SPURT

The drought has really upset our schedule - some stalwarts have been out listening a lot, many more have listened some, with not as many good results for the survey as we'd hoped to get.

But things are changing and may improve! There have been some good rainfalls in eastern NSW; many of our key sites and areas are primed. The monsoonal weather that's developing could turn it ON for young and old and the frogs!

Our report is due mid-this-year and we need more survey results. We must capitalise on any good frog breeding conditions that may come <u>this</u> season. We have some excellent data for many species (of our target 21 species) that occur near Sydney but we are deficient on a number of others from further afield.

#### For information on:

- 1. where to go
- 2. which species to concentrate on
- 3. who else could go with you
- 4. who else you could go with
- 5. weather and rainfall data
- 6. who to contact up north or down south phone Lothar today on (02) 371 9129 or attend the next meeting.

#### Harald Ehmann



#### FROG NEWS AROUND THE COUNTRY

The ASH Conference at Laurel Hill Prison Farm on 9. -12.2, which we mentioned in FROGCALL 13, is just about booked out. With accommodation for only 110 and already 105 herpetologists enrolled (on 17.1.), there is only one solution: Build a bigger jail.

Can you hear the refrain - bigger jail, bigger jail? It's by the Singing Woodchippers.

If you're going and want a lift, or want to offer a lift, you can use me as your bulletin board (Lothar on 371 9129).

NSW NPWS have a special place in our Inc. association's Objects, where in Clause 4 we work in close contact with them and assist them wherever possible. If they only let us. Progress to date on the licensing agreement that was verbally all sown up at the top level is nil.

A reminder and for those who are new to it: No, you can't catch or keep any frog or tadpole of any kind at present. The exceptions are

- long-term captives (prior to December 1991 when the Act came in),
- legally acquired ones (like you have a scientific licence, or interstate ones from a time pre-dating any
  equivalent interstate Act),
- · the offspring of either group above.

The present situation helps neither NPWS nor us nor the frogs. One example out of many: You have long-term captive Green or White-lipped Tree Frogs - no paperwork needed - and you breed them, fine. But: If you have any

your local greengrocer found in the bananas, then they or their offspring are illegal. Let the greengrocer deal with them? Send them back if you don't know the area they came from, and hybridise around? Give them to WIRES? They keep giving them to us. - NPWS are sympathetic to the dilemma and have asked us to write off for an interim ruling, so that nature's surplus can be passed around. Before somebody here drowns in White-lipped Tree Frog tads!

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL'S FAMILY FROG FUN is going to happen on Sunday, 12.2. at 2 pm. \$8 (\$4 for kids), but a Council's donation for FATS. Nice plug for us by Northern Herald too. (498 0977 Council or 371 9129 mc). L.V.

#### MEMBER NEWS

A Cane Toad was produced at Kellyville, a short hop from Sydney proper. It was "as big as your face" (Martyn's words; he was clearly enjoying the thought of only my ears sticking out) and "weighed half a kilogram" (SMH of 12.1.).. She can now be inspected in all her gravid glory in the Australian Museum's Environment Exhibition. In recent years several others have been brought in from Kellyville where they appear to be popping up in and around a palm tree nursery. Are they using them as mulch up north or just as packing material on the trucks?

Last year in February Harald heard a Cane Toad calling between Windsor and Wilberforce but couldn't get to it. They're out there, all right, waiting for the greenhouse effect.

Is everything heading southwards? Mike Crawley sent Martyn a *Litoria tyleri* (a tree frog named after a long-legged person, probably no resemblance intended). This one came from Bateman's Bay, a modest range extension. It should reach Adelaide by mid-November.

Danny, in his spare capacity as a NPWS ranger in the Blue Mountains, has found that one can astonish tourists simply by showing them a tyleri. Being such a large handsome fellow, as we well know, this is not astonishing at all!

Barbara Harvey went west last September. She took part in a biodiversity survey of Mt. Elvira Station in the eastern goldfields region of WA. Plenty of animals but only two frog species were uncovered in the dry weather: *Pseudophryne occidentalis* under exfoliations on a granite outcrop, and *Neobatracus kunapulari* in a pitfall trap in woodland country.

On 18.1. Jacquie also headed out west, well, to West Head, with the CALM people Angus, Jenny and Louise. Their prize find was an Eastern Owl Frog (Heleioporus australiacus) although a very dehydrated and emaciated one, at Salvation Creek. And there were Red-crowned Toadlets (Pseudophryne australis), Litoria phyllochroa (the southern call race!), freycineti and their tadpoles and last not least Crinia signifera, the ubiquitous Common Eastern Froglet.

Jacquie's field trip on 3.12. to Darkes Forest was bone dry. The catchment river was very low. She and Deborah, Giselle, Grant, Barbara, Trevor, David and Ken had gone to find Eastern Owl Frogs but saw and heard instead lots of Blue Mountains Bell Frogs (Litoria citropa) and their tads, together with Litoria peronii and phyllochroa, a Uperoleia, Crinia signifera of course and the Banjo Lim. dumerilii.

A welcome to all our new members! Many of them are from the NSW North Coast where the Northern Star ran a great Christmas article on frogs and FATS. And heaps of our new members started writing in straight away: Frogs getting scarcer, frogs breeding in an old swimming pool; up to 30 Green Tree Frogs on the walls and windows of the house eating the insects the light attracts; telling cane toad tads from frog tads; eight Green Tree Frogs that wedged themselves together in a tight place to conserve moisture; algae problems; raising tadpole problems; and over and over again drowning metamorphs because the sides are too steep.

David Stewart, the Mullumbimby naturalist with the stunning digital frog sound recording equipment, has the intake pipe of his large concrete tank totally blocked by tadpoles of the Great Barred Frog Mixophyes fasciolatus! This is the selfsame David who put up with us, and put us up, during the 1993 FROGWEEK tour and who a few weeks ago trekked around with Michael, Jacquie and Karen where they saw two of the rare Mixophyes fleay and at Tiagarah Swamp the long-nosed Wallum Reed Frogs Litoria olongburensis. (Hopefully more of that at the meeting!)

BREVIES are back! You could hardly be more excited if you thought they were ladies' undergarments! In my day NZ ladies were "easies", whatever they were. The brevy, bothy pursued but rarely seen, has become an equally endangered species. It is *Litoria brevipalmata*, the deliciously Green-thighed Tree Frog. And, after some reasonable rains at last, it is turning up in a number of places:

- Phil Wild Man Green almost ran over one near Wyong and organised a follow-up data-taking field trip for two
  days later.
- Shane who of course couldn't wait for two whole days bolted straight off and found lots of them at nearby
  Orimbah. Warm, humid evening, everything still wet, and 15 20 males calling! Five males were measured, at 42
   50 mm (each!).

- Next night, acute brevy fever on Phil's field trip with Marion, Alf and his son David, Shane again and me. None at the Wyong site (but one Green Tree Frog calling and lots of other tree frogs around dentata, peronii, latopalmata and freycineti, with tyleri and fallax next door. Then, travelling on to Orimbah, there they were, the brevies! Two on the wet but still warm road, intermixed with a Green Tree Frog and a Red-eyed Tree Frog both huge and gravid and with a tragically freshly squashed Golden-crowned Snake. And two by the swampy creek, amongst several still plentiful species and amidst some pretty sweetly fluting tree frogs that had us truly flummoxed (and, it seems, generations of froggers before us).
- Arthur, when he gets back, will have to tell us all about the brevies that turned up at Tarce.
- Last summer we had an interesting account of three brevies at Whiporie near Grafton. Janet found them near her
  place and Michael identified them.

David Stewart has produced a one hour CD "Voices of Subtropical Rainforests", featuring 13 frog species and lots of bird, mammal and other sounds (\$25.95 + \$3 postage). He has now also compiled a field survey tape "Birds and Frog Calls of NE NSW" with 44 frog species (\$15 + \$3). If you want any (and the sound is as clear as a bell!) send him your order to P.O. Box 256, Mullumbimby 2482, Phone/fax (066) 840 127, - We'll also have his flyer and frog list pinned up at the meeting.

L.V.



#### ALL RIGHT, HAVE YOUR SAY

- Something should be done about the weather instead of just talking about it. The recent heat wave has murdered a number of Green Tree Frogs, all long acclimatised pets. This could happen again before the summer is over.
   (Deborah) Claude tells me he can't be of help at the moment, due to heat exhaustion, but says there is a simple remedy. Put a damp towel over the cage and buy a fan from him. Or go to any other hardware shop and firmly ask for a frog fan. Evaporative cooling, real cool, n'est ce pas? (Ed.)
- We sometimes get reminded to THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY. (No apologies about this old saw, even if
  you lived in a woodchipping area.) Phil has been involved in battling developers over the future of Cox Creek
  Bushland near Sylvanus Street at Greenacre.
- Why can't we have more instructive stuff in FROGCALL? Short tutorials about amphibian biology. We're still waiting for someone to say something about what a spiracle is and about sexes of tadpoles. Or what people are doing in frog ecology, or what they're thinking of doing or what they have come up with. Not the full works, just the interesting bits, in a few sentences, like, Gee, I dunno. (Lothar) You are obviously a very perceptive and intelligent fellow, and I am pleased to pass your comments on to all our friends and colleagues who sometimes write as well as read. (Ed)
- Talking of frogs and mice again, here's a tip for you computer literati. There is now a Sicos Green Mouse, 100% recycled (i.e. total rubbish, but good for you), together with an even more recycled booklet and with a pledge to donate some of their proceeds to saving frogs and their environment in Madagascar. (Deborah again, who swears by her mouse, on 980 7200) Don't worry how many mice you'd need to buy to save one megabyte of frogs.

  Just buy them. It is the acorn that needs nurturing, not the tree.
- Do we have a member who could audit our books? And also tell us how to lay them out better for future audits?
   The grants we keep chasing require such things. Please ring Martyn (339 8364) or me (371 9129).

L.V.



#### CLAUDE'S PETIT 'ARDWARE



Could you wrap the ladder up for me? Well .....

I don't want my husband to see it

Oh, well. - It's gonna be a present then?

No.

Well?

Well, I ... - Look. He's got this dead fish nailed to the tree above the letter box, and I can't get it down without the ladder.

Sure. He's got a fish nailed to the tree. Over the letter box. An' you can't get it down without the ladder. Cripes!!! Do you still get any mail these days? I gotta see this when I drop the ladder over! Well, well!

Do you know what he just said, Claude? Your assistant? He said, "Just try dripping if you don't want to, you swine."!!! That man is un...

Madame, he is right - I have been teaching him well! Did he really say, "Try some dripping if you don't want to use wine"? And did he explain to you the Robinson Roacher and the Martyni Trap? I fled and came straight here.

It will be my pleasure to show you, Madame. Ici, the Martyni Trap: a jam jar with a few drops of red wine at the bottom and a little bit of fruit cake. A thick 4cm wide smear of vaseline around the inside at the top and paper pasted to the outside of the jar so that the cockroaches can get in but not out. Tres bien for your frogs bon apetit! And the Robinson Roacher is even simpler: no wine or bait in the jar, but use dripping instead of vaseline. Because this jar is empty apart from all the cockroaches, you can tip them straight into the frog cage. If you have plenty of cockroaches in your kitchen or in your compost bin, either trap could be nearly full in a day.

I have seen jars like that in the Australian Museum, but I thought they were exhibits.

And you know what he was doin' when I dropped the ladder over? He was painting the garage wall! There is nothing unusual ...

With sandwiches? As high as he could reach, Claude. He had a huge pile of them. There he was opening up one after the other and spreading the butter and whatever else was on them right along the wall. And you know what else? At night he jumps up and down along that wall, without sandwiches. I nearly pranged the truck driving past. That guy is weird, I tell you. You should see his back garden - he's got ten outside toilet boxes along the fence, all out in the open!

But they are his compost bins, on the design of which I have been informed. The hole in each lid is for putting a large upside down jar over. When he kicks the bin, the jar fills with flies which he then, with a card slid underneath, takes to his frogs. There are also garden frogs under the bins which stand on bricks. Invertebrates that fall through the mesh in the base provide food for them. No doubt you saw the sprinklers positioned near the compost to keep it and the frogs moist? And the agricultural pipe sticking out of each bin to help aerate the compost?

Thought they were stink pipes. But what's that bed frame for that stands on a big tin funnel with a bucket under? The Ehmann Bed! The compost goes from the bins onto the bed, but before he sieves it through he lets it dry out. Invertebrates crawl down in search of moisture and eventually fall into the bucket. Imagine a whole bucket full of insects and worms and spiders!

I and

Ah, how I long to see his garden and his aviary! Imagine, a flyscreened aviary for a whole clutch of Green Tree Frogs, with heated water in a styro box, with a hot rock in a dry styro box with entrance holes and with an endless supply of flies funnelled in from some of the compost bins. Did you know he is teaching his dog to keep the flies moving? He has simply placed the dog's food and drink bowls on top of the bins ... There's a customer, Claude.

'Allo, Monsieur Schoolmaster, entre, si vous plais.

Hi, I thought you might know some of the people around here. I'm looking for a fellow who keeps hanging round the school and rummages through our rubbish bins. After every lunch break he makes off with a huge pile of sandwiches.

I know that guy!

I can assure you that all is well, Monsieur Schoolmaster. Those surplus sandwiches are being put to excellent use, to attract cockroaches which 'e then skilfully collects with 'is own 'ands every night. A true community service, no?

Hello, Mister Monsieur! - Hi, Monsieur! - Hello! - Only using your loo. - Careful, the teach is here. - Lemme out!

I know you children. You're the ones who always run off to the toilet at school. Shouldn't you see a doctor?

Nope. - Actually, we're terribly healthy. - It's all this fruit we're cating. - An' the orange juice. - But Dad needs the peel.

But why?

He stuffs the peel under the planks. He first rakes last week's peel away and chucks it in the compost bins. - He's got planks on the ground all along the garden fence. - And plank shelving above them, with tadpole boxes. - Broccoli boxes with overflow holes. He keeps pouring pond water in. - Yeah, but he's getting a pump now. - Thing is, the overflow also keeps the ground damp, and the planks with the orange peel. - You should see the frogs under those planks, in between all the fruit flies and slaters!

Frogs! Next term we shall discuss them in class. I must write off to the FATS Group for the Wotherspoon Paper on how to introduce frogs into the Science and Technology curriculum. Monsieur, how much is a ladder, a tall one? - Dad keeps nailing fish in the tree but they always get taken down. He has to hang them higher. - Otherwise the frog that lives in our letter box won't get enough flies to eat.

(Ed. edict: Enough is enough about loos and bog frogs. We all know about the terrible things that can happen, Harald, and we all feel sorry for the plight of plumbers, users and user-friendly frogs alike. We feel even sorrier for the cistern-born tadpoles: dyed and disinfected, they clearly don't have a leg to stand on. None of them wanted such a turbulent life and such long, boring interludes during which they cannot but study us. Now that we have finally clarified who in the Frog and Tadpole Study Group - and in "Streamwatch" - is studying whom we must also

concede that they are better at it than us. After all, they know us back to front! - All right, let's get it out of our system (cistern?) with this final contribution that came in 5 minutes before closing time. (L.V.)

#### THE DUNNY FROGS

Four kids: "Hey, Dad! Can we please go check out the Dunny Frogs?"

Father is swamped by recollections of police, sniffer dogs and stern warnings against frogging in a public place.

Kids commence relentless imploring strategy. Father gives in after 16 rounds. "Okay, get your gummies on."

Ten gumboots thudding through local council park. Remnant Blackbutt forest - Eucalyptus pilularis. There in the gloom stands the Dunny. Ancient. Pull chain. Spooky. But home to the tree frog species Litoria dentata and tyleri - both reclassified by the kids as "the Dunny Frogs".

For 12 months the kids have been monitoring the Dunny Frogs' movements, as the frogs soak in the cistern and chase insects around the walls.

Torches on! Charge!

"Hey, guys! Not in the female toilet!"

"But Daaaaad! There's more frogs in there."

A quick mental struggle, a quick look left and right, and Father was propelled over the threshold with a feeling of equal opportunity:- to boldly go where no man had gone before.

Next should come the shouts of discovery and of fighting over who saw them first. But not tonight. No screaming, no yelling. Just silence. And four disappointed faces.

"Dad, there's no frogs. "

The "Dunny Frogs" had become a dependable part of the kids' lives, but tonight their world had been shattered - no frogs.

Fortunately, on rare occasion, fathers can come up with explanations for the meanings of the cosmos, and tonight was one of those rarities.

You see, the father was a member of the FATS Group and of course knew that something happens to frogs at this time of year, especially if it has just rained.

"Hey, kids! The frogs haven't died or disappeared. They are over in the billabong - mating."

Disappointment turned into ecstasy as four kids plunged bodily into the depth of the swamp.

"Hey, look! There's one!"

"Don't touch it! Leave it alone!"

Post script (January 4, 1995):

Both species, Litoria dentata and tyleri, had been observed climbing the walls of the amenities block on about eight different occasions throughout the year. This night the dentata had travelled 30 m to a shallow roadside drain and were creating a deafening din. The tyleri had gone 30 m in the opposite direction to a small reed-lined billabong where there were also Litoria fallax and Lim. peronii calling, but no dentata. Meanwhile, in the drain, the dentatas were accompanied by Crinia signifera and Uperoleia fusca or laevigata. Strangely, a small billabong only 20 m from the above billabong didn't have any species calling. Was it polluted or was it just not their scene?

Half a km away the four kids and I drove along a bitumen road through a Melaleuca swamp and found a Litoria brevipalmata hopping across the road. It had rained earlier that day and on several preceding days. The temperature that evening was 23 degrees. Other species calling in the area were Litoria latopalmata, freycineti, caerulea, dentata and Limnodynastes peronii.

Philip Green

### **OUR CHANGING FROGCALL**

The recycled paper we started using in the last issue is very nice but increased our printing cost by 20%. Now that we use Australia Post's equivalent of bulk billing, we have again broken even.

As you see, you have been labelled. You are spinning on Deborah's disk and nothing short of (a) a head crash, (b) expired membership or (c) a wrong address can shorten your life. For the former, pray to have her file "saved" (because on a clear disk you can seek forever); for (b) simply pay and for (c) give Deborah or Giselle a ring on 980 7200 resp. 897 5066 if your label needs a change.

The last meeting thought some cartoons would be fun (to reach those parts of the brain plain old text can't get to). Your contributions will be cherished if there's no copyright on them. Your improvements to FROGCALL's content would help even more. Thanks. Over and out. L.V.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The fees listed below are to stay current up to May 95 plus for the following 12 months, i.e. till May 96. (They haven't gone up; they are for a year and a half.)

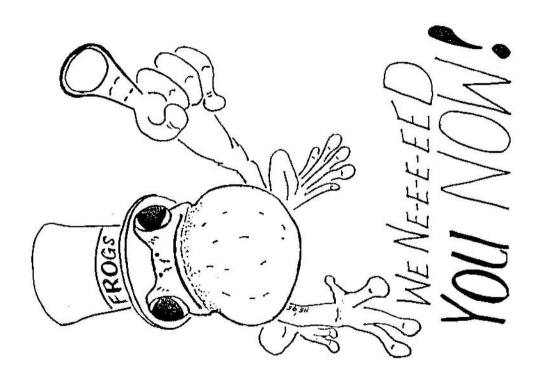
Membership with Frogcall and Herpetofauna	\$30
Membership with Frogcall	\$15
Family membership with Frogcall and Herpetofauna	\$45
Family membership with Frogcall	\$30
Overseas membership with Frogcall and Herpetofauna airmailed	\$45
Overseas membership with Frogcall	\$30
Corporate membership (w. Frogcall, H'fauna, poster, certificate)	\$150



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