

FROG CALL



NUMBER 22 MARCH 1996

THE FROG AND TADPOLE
STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC.

P.O. Box A2405
Sydney South NSW 2000

THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 12th April, at 7:00 for a 7:30 pm start
at the Australian Museum (William St. entrance)

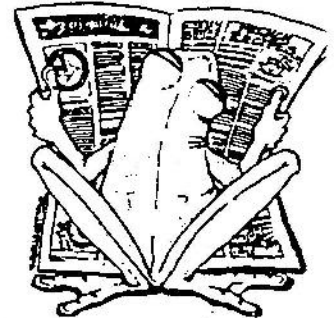
Postponed by one week:
Good Friday got in the way!

SPEAKERS:

Lothar Voigt	Are we counting up the wrong tree? (From survey data towards wisdom - but how?)
Arthur White	A frog of the Sydney region A new series for you: This time it's the "tock" one.
Martyn Robinson	For what it's worth Some froggish queries the Museum gets
Everybody	My 5 froggy / taddy / eggy slides

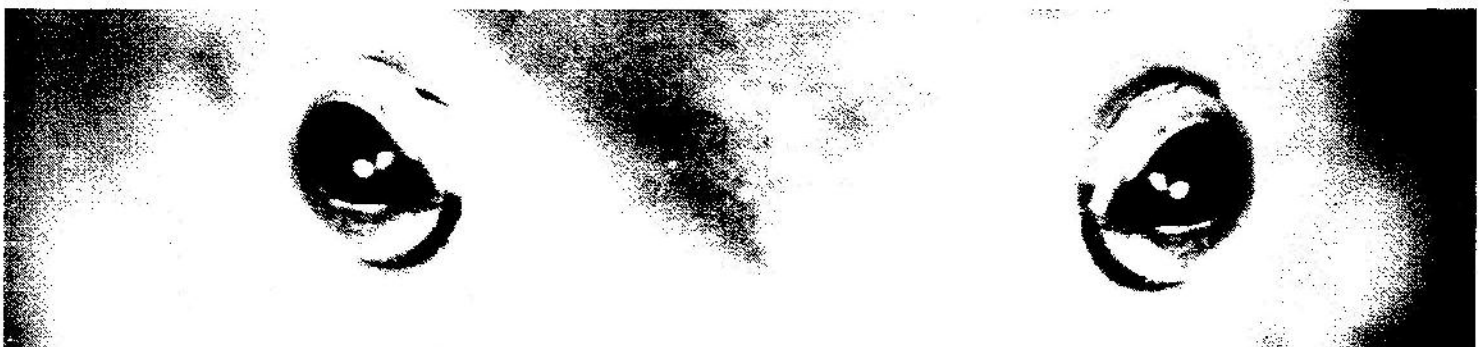
REGULAR FEATURES

News and announcements,
field trips, projects,
refreshments! Auction,
discussions, arguments,
gossip, welcome table!
No \$2 door donation for
paid-up members: Bring a
visitor!



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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 FROG CALL and the FROGFACTS information sheets.

THE LAST MEETING (2.2.96)

Apologies from Lothar Voigt who was going to speak about "Frogs as environmental monitors" - he was bitten by a monitor. Martyn Robinson chaired the meeting.

Philip Green presented a most interesting and enjoyable talk illustrated by his slides and a demonstration on his method of locating Barred Frog (*Mixophyes*) species using low powered headlamps to produce eye shine. Phil then spoke about the *Litoria phyllochroa* complex and the confusion surrounding the identity of some morphs.

Barbara Bird talked about breeding the White-lipped Tree Frog *Litoria infrafrenata* and her housing of them. Barbara inherited the pair which Shane Gow had previously spawned.

A recess was held for refreshments and catching up.

The raffles drawn had the following results:

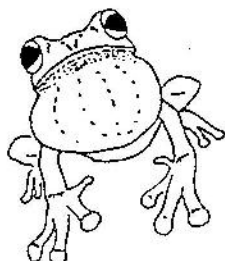
CD ROM (Frogs & Reptiles)	K. Gore
Ceramic house	Robert Halliday
Jar of honey	K. Gore
Styro frog cage 1	Rainer Enke
Styro frog cage 2	Sam Avery
Styro frog cage 3	Mr Hafey

Many thanks from everybody to all who donated raffle prizes.

Frank Lemckert informed us about radio tracking the Green-thighed Tree Frog *Litoria brevipalmata* and presented some excellent slides.

Ken Griffiths showed an interesting series of slides including metamorphs of *Litoria jervisensis* (the Jervis Bay Tree Frog) and *Heleioporus australiacus* (the Giant Burrowing Frog), of a specimen of *Mixophyes balbus* (an endangered Barred Frog) and shots of field trips.

David Millar



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next AGM will be at our June meeting on Friday, 7.6.96. It will follow our "normal" meeting and consist of the President's and Treasurer's reports and election of the new committee. Nomination forms will be available at the April meeting or can be sent to you by the Secretary.

Your membership fees will also be due by then. The next issue will have your renewal form enclosed. Or pick one up at the April meeting and give the one in the mail to a friend.

Lothar Voigt

LIVE ANIMALS AT MEETINGS

In one of our first issues we asked that no animals should be brought to meetings unless prior clearance has been obtained from one of the four "office bearers" (President, Chair, Secretary or Treasurer). It's a policy we inherited from the AHS and one we confirmed at a recent committee meeting.

If you have a reason to bring any animal in, please discuss it with one of the four bears.

L.V.

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR FOR APRIL TO MAY 1996

FATS field trips are now going into their winter recess as the cooler weather means there are few frogs to be seen and the nights are also less comfortable for us endotherms. The only "field trip" planned so far is the photography day (see details below), but if any field trips are considered for the more wintry species then I will let you know at the meeting or in the next newsletter (or you can always give me a call). Remember though, if someone would like to see a field trip run at any time, then please contact me so that I can try to

arrange it. I am always open to suggestions and especially welcome them from the newer members.

In the next newsletter I will be publishing a list of field trips and dates projected for the next year. I hope that doing so will provide you all with a better chance to plan what trips you would like to go on and give you time to make suggestions to me about further venues. As always I will welcome any feedback on the proposed field trips.

Photography Day

I have not been able to arrange this so far as I can't get hold of Martyn. The idea would be to go to (say) the Australian Museum education area on a Saturday or Sunday and have people like Ken Griffiths, Pavel German, Gunther Schmida, Phil Green etc. give a talk on how they take their wildlife shots. This would be followed by a hands-on session with suitable frogs where everyone present can set up a shoot and be given some "expert" advice on how to use their camera to its maximum benefit. As soon as I can determine whether such an event is possible to arrange I will provide more details. The hope would be then that we would follow up this trip in spring with a "shoot 'em in the wild" event.

Frank Lemckert

RECENT FIELD TRIPS

Royal National Park

I apologise for the late notification of this field trip and the uncertainty as to whether it was going to proceed (until the newsletter arrived Debbie Andrew from NPWS and myself both thought it was going to be on the following weekend). I hope that all those attending enjoyed themselves and saw some interesting frogs. Debbie Andrew said she is keen to have further joint expeditions at some stage in the future.

Brooklyn Dam

The turn out for this trip was small, but the people who did go still managed to have a good time and see a few frogs (see Karen's write-up).

Olney State Forest

Obviously the frogs are not the only creatures winding down for the winter as the turn up for this event was also very small. Those hardy souls (soles?) that could tear themselves away from the excitement of the election saw several frog species including Leaf-green Tree Frogs, Eastern Banjo Frogs and a couple of those impossible to identify species of *Uperoleia*. This area is well worth visiting in spring on a non-election weekend.

F.L.



EXCURSION TO BROOKLYN DAM

Well it was a bit late in the season and we weren't anticipating the campers, whose gentle strumming made it difficult to hear the few frogs which still wanted to call...

In spite of these constraints we had an enjoyable time, the highlight of which was a mass of *Litoria fallax* (Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog) metamorphs in the reeds at the edge of the dam. Furthermore, *Crinia signifera* (Common Eastern Froglet) and *Litoria phyllochroa* (Leaf-green Tree Frog) were calling, unlike the Red-crowned Toadlets and Giant Burrowing Frogs which we know are there but were not giving themselves away.

Particularly pleasing was the fact that there were representatives of the local Hornsby Shire Council and the NPWS with us, wanting to learn more about frogs...

Karen Thumm

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Holiday report from Deborah Pergolotti phoned down from Far North Queensland:

Although currently stranded by floods, this has not "dampened" her spirits and Deborah is enjoying the time observing some different frog species from what we see in Sydney.

She has seen the Northern Barred Frog *Mixophyes schevilli*, *Litoria infrafrenata* (that's the Giant or White-lipped Tree Frog) and tons of *L. gracilentia* (the Dainty Green Tree Frog) when there is very heavy rain. She has also observed the Orange-thighed Frog *L. xanthomera* which was exciting because they usually stay high in the rainforest canopy and only come down low when calling. And lastly Deborah has seen the Wood Frog *Rana daemeli*, the only Australian species of this huge family.

Stay tuned for the next edition of *Frogcall* for a report from Deborah on the recent frog activities at Lamington.

Giselle Howard

THE WANTED COLUMN

Needed: Frog Week subcommittee people. Energetic, lovable and trainable, presentable to sponsors and the media. Ring Frank on (02) 487 4345 (h) or (02) 872 0159 (w).

Frog Week 96 is Sunday, 3.11. - Saturday, 9.11.
Time flies!

Wanted: A Veterinary Pathologist for CSIRO. Not to save the rabbits but to clobber the Cane Toads. Anyone for a spell in a high security facility at Geelong?

Wanted: A "Tadpole Page" person. Needs to do a kid stuff page from time to time for *Frogcall*. Also a **cartoonist or nature artwork creator**. (Sculptors are excused, this is a slim volume.) Ring the editors.

Wanted: A popular science writer, to explode the mysteries of frogs in two-monthly instalments for *Frogcall*. Also, if you have **freaky hidden talents** (statistics or data base management to one day make sense of the Australian Frog Count; specifying educational or research projects using common old garden materials) or if you can keep a watchful frog eye on the **Internet** for *Frogcall*, let the editors know, please. Before the FATS Group gets too THIN.

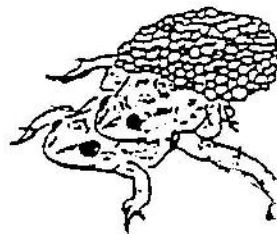
Is there an accountant in the Group? We need to check or revamp our worldly procedures for auditability. Helps chasing grants. One-off job. Ring Arthur the Treasurer on (02) 599 1161.

Who'd like to count road kills? Species, weather, time, date, where and length of road stretch. Especially important if endangered species involved. Gives us new study sites and you untold status ("Your mum's a fireman? Well, my dad's a road kill counter!"). And wear something bright at night - no good becoming a statistic yourself.

Wanted: People with fund finding instinct. Funding the frogs is harder than finding them, partly because our membership fees are so terribly low. How about:-

- Let it be you who brings the largest item - or the most useless saleable one - to the next raffle or auction. Donate your mozzie hat, your golden swamp leotards or your Wellington boots with stride-operated bilge pump.
- In case there's not enough singing at our meetings: Practice something, give it a go and pass the hat around. (If painful, next time the mere threat may suffice.)
- Open your garden pond to the public and charge them. That would make a splash! Serve them lamingtons - they float.

L.V.





FROGBITS & TADPIECES

More frog call tapes have arrived. David Stewart's. Sydney region; North Coast; Brisbane area. \$15 each at the next FATS meeting.

Australia All Over: FATS made a brief appearance on the ABC's Australia All Over. Unfortunately someone had written in with the old address, which was then promptly advertised. The live interview did not lend itself to giving out many of the froggy messages which I would have felt useful, but I suppose that all publicity for frogs has to be considered positive. There was an opportunity to talk about frog declines and to tell the public how to encourage frogs to gardens.

K. T.

ENDFROGS, the Endangered Frog Survey we have been spending countless nights on, is just about completed. More at the meeting!

The new Frogwatch is part of Streamwatch in NSW! Starting off with year 5-8 kids (the first batch of teachers were trained on 6.3.), later also for senior Streamwatch. Up to 100 000 kids then. Watch this space.

The Australian Sperm Count? Three articles in one month - four if you count the Tel. Mirror - is a bit much: "What's wrong with our sperm?" (Time, 18.3.96); "Unnatural evolution" (New Scientist, 2.3.96); "Cleaning agents may cause birth defects, sterility" (SMH, 1.3.96). Apparently a number of pesticides and other estrogen-mimics are good at finishing the little pests off. Sadly, tadpoles, their bigger look-alikes, and frogs, the indicators of all things pregnant, are not immune either. What can we do? Perhaps follow Philip Green's identification ritual: Check out their underpants.

(Something like this happened in Mexico to one of the *Frogcall* editors. Asked to identify himself at one of the many internal borders, he of course had to lower his trousers to get at his burglar-

proof inside pocket. He was hastily told that his passport would be quite sufficient! Hard to drive after that, with tears blurring one's eyes.)

The Hip-pocket Frog (*Assa darlingtoni*) sits smack on the NSW - Queensland border. He keeps tadpoles in his pockets, though.

Family frog fun with frog spotting and mud treading at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens on Saturday, 18.5. at 7 pm. \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids. Ring the Museum Society: (02) 320 6225.

Turf growers are greener than ever. In case you thought all they do is rolling up the grass frogs and translocating them, their research institute staged a big environmental conference on 4.-5. March in Penrith. Lots of speakers on keeping pesticides and nutrients out of the waterways, on accrediting golf clubs for it, on wildlife refugia for council parks and environmental management strategies for turf users.

Nice frozen mice, crickets in bulk and other wholesale wholesomes Queensland has to offer. Martyn will have price list at the meeting.

Sydney Buses are sprouting posters on their sides with tadpoles, all in monochrome, swimming into a box of film and frogs, all in very false colours, hopping out on the other side. At last a film for those who can't tell the difference?

The Department of Immigration has been running full-page ads in the Herald on how wonderful and free this country is. Their top example: This is a peaceful place where you can grow up collecting tadpoles and where those childhood memories stay with you forever. Nice one.

The Herp Readers' Book Club at the Australian Reptile Park in Gosford is still going strong. Heaps of great frog and reptile books! Monthly meetings. Ring John Weigel on (043) 284 311.

Grigg/Barker/Tyler's "Field Guide to Australian Frogs" has flooded the book shops. A steal at \$34.95.

L. V.



Tadpole Page

Hi young froggers! Two issues ago, in Frogcall 20, Deborah gave you a crossword puzzle to try. Here are the answers she phoned through to Giselle from her holiday:

Across:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. tadpoles | 12. <i>Limnodynastes</i> | |
| 2. Cane Toad | 15. (oops, our mistake - sorry) | |
| 3. plants | | |
| 4. moth | Down: | |
| 5. flies | 1. pan | |
| 6. frog pond | 2. lettuce | 9. <i>Gambusia</i> |
| 7. <i>Litoria</i> | 3. swamp | 10. walk |
| 8. Upe | 4. metamorph | 11. Toadlet |
| 9. eggs | 5. <i>bennetti</i> | 12. keep |
| 10. rain | 6. hot | 13. cricket |
| 11. Tyler | 7. FATS Group | 14. metal |
| | 8. Pobblebonk | 15. call |

Feel like a quick quiz?

Kids get all the brainy stuff. Best to hide this page from the "groan-ups" before they get wise!

- How many frog species are in Australia?
 - 21
 - over 200
 - 4937
- How many frog families are there now in Australia? (Not including zoos of course)
 - 5
 - 21
- In New South Wales, which amphibians are you allowed to buy in shops?
 - none
 - Axolotls
 - tadpoles
- Why do so many frogs spawn in temporary puddles?
 - nice fresh water
 - no fish in them to eat the taddies
 - to make the tads hurry up and become frogs
- What do tadpoles eat?
 - mostly greenstuff



- What happens to a tadpole's tail?
 - it shrivels and gets shorter
 - it falls off
 - both
- Should you wash your hands before or after you hold a frog?
 - before, to get your sweat or mozzie spray off and to make your hands wet
 - after, to get the frog's poisonous skin secretions off your hands
 - both
- If you hold a frog to identify it and the frog wriggles because it's scared, what should you do?
 - hold it tighter?
 - try constant petting to reassure it?
 - put it in a clear plastic bag, look at it through the bag and then let it go straight away?
- Why could a frog pond be dangerous for young kids?
 - it could be deep or slippery
 - it could be very cold
 - some frogs are really big
- How could you make a pond in a park safer?
 - keep it under 30 cm deep
 - plant prickly roses around the edges (outside the pond)
 - plant a thicket of swamp plants along the edges (inside the pond)
 - have a soggy marsh area between the pond and the land (perhaps just under water so you don't breed mozzies there!)
 - put a bridge with a (fenced) railing across it, so kids can look into the water more safely
 - put reminder signs up for parents to keep an eye on their toddlers
 - all of the above

Answers next time! Maybe. L.V.



THINGS THAT GO BONK IN THE NIGHT

Thank goodness you're back, Claude. Hey, have you got tadpoles in your ears? I'm talking to you!

One minute, please. There, that's better. I've been counting frogs all night. And then I forgot to take my ear plugs out this morning.

If you had married me, you wouldn't need any ear plugs, Claude. I don't snore. Everybody knows that.

No, it's not the snoring, Madame, it's those mating noises. The whole neighbourhood can hear it and they're complaining now.

Not me. I would have stayed quiet.

It's too late. They have already complained to the council.

Oh. But would they know who's responsible?

I'm afraid they do, Madame. You see, you can identify them by their mating noises. They all sound different.

Wow! What a neighbourhood!

Mine sound like banging pieces of wood together. Down the road it's like starting a motor bike and hysterical laughter. The other night I taped some of them. I found two of my neighbours doing the same thing, as evidence for the council, they said.

How very embarrassing! What did you do?

I gave them some ear plugs. And the next day I sold them double glazing and a quiet air conditioner for their bedrooms. They weren't going to keep their windows closed otherwise. It will be much quieter now. And next Christmas I'm putting a "Silent Night" kit on special: two torches, a desk fan and a reminder sticker to keep the window shut and the door open. All in a gift box.

I must visit you for a demonstration. It sounds like fun with torches. Strange I never thought of it. Where does the reminder sticker go?

You simply let it flutter from the fan, to generate white noise. Drowns other sounds out, of course. And Madame, I can hardly wait for your visit. Come when it's dark and rainy, and we'll take the torches into the garden.

Garden???

With two torches from different sides we should be able to get a good bearing on the noisiest offenders. We'll grab them and take them straight over to the council. We'll chuck them in their pond.

You radical fiend! That's going a bit far, even for me!

Oh, we would drive them over, of course. And then, in they go!

We'd get into all sorts of trouble.

Not if we get our permits first. I don't know how many...

And they'd be in trouble too!

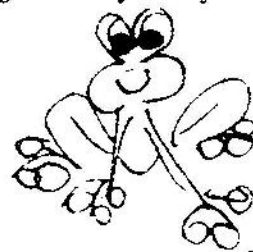
Ah, yes. You are quite right. Because the council pond is already full of them. And we'd have to keep at it, catching more and more in the garden as others come in over the fence and make more racket.

And they really do that?

Yes, even under the fence. Sexual frenzy knows no bounds. I think the council just has to build special facilities for them in their parks. Better than any other monument to the council's vision and tolerance. Each family only has a few members that love it in people's back gardens. The rest of a whole family can be in big trouble, when the world will just about consist of back gardens and they have nowhere else to go. Save the ones that annoy you the most, for only they can inherit the earth! Councillors, your chance to repent!

Claude, that gleam in your eye! Lemme out!!!

L.V.



I am becoming
 cynical with the passing of the
 years.

January 29

Iris M. Gilmore,
 Blacktown.

How fortunate are the
 people of Wollstonecraft to be
 able to hear the sounds of
 nature above the noise of
 aircraft, traffic and the general
 mechanical hum of the city.
 I fall about in ecstasy every
 time I am able to hear a
 croaking frog in my backyard.
 It reminds me that I have
 successfully warded off city life
 neurosis, one of the symptoms
 of which appears to be an
 over-sensitivity to natural
 sounds.

Robyn Stutchbury,
 Linley Point.
 January 29

Oh my! Did anyone warn
 Paul Keating about the "Ides of
 March"?

The Editor
 The Sydney Morning Herald
 Fax 282 3492

January 29, 1996

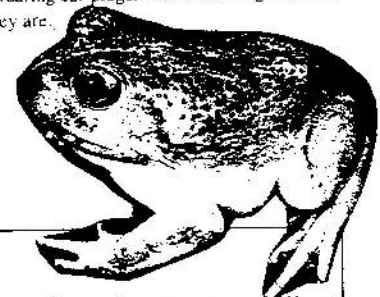
Dear Sir or Madam:

FROG FREE ZONE

I was amazed to read that North Sydney Council wants Mrs Bannister to get rid of the wild frogs that have noisy mating rituals in her garden (*Herald*, January 29). The council's approach of threatening her with the Noise Control Act is a singularly useless exercise. The frogs are simply not her property, and they are protected to boot! Will the council also decree that wild birds and flying foxes must not use her garden, unless they are conducting themselves quietly? Surely it's not the council librarian's jurisdiction that's expanding? Is it the dog catcher's?

My sympathy, however, to those urbanites who manage to sleep though traffic noise but are so alienated from nature that frogs keep them awake because I was one of them. But as my husband and I became older and plumper, we began snoring loudly. The last one to fall asleep was always guaranteed to have a bad night. That's when we started wearing ear plugs. And if the frogs are still calling in the back yard, I can't hear them. But I hope they are.

R. Della
 Rose Bay



IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- **After the sunset.** It's no longer "Schedule 12" in NSW, and nominated environments will at last get protection too! But will Red-necked Toadlets be sitting in the local councils?
- **Reader letters.** Including your own.
- **Urban releases.** The perils of stocking up your frog pond and the perils of sitting on the fence. Contribute to the grey debate! Your view may be the gleam in the mud!

The Committee

		phone	fax
Lothar Voigt	President, AAHS Councillor <i>FROGCALL</i> ed., Public Officer	(02) 371 9129	(02) 371 9129
Martyn Robinson	Chairman	(02) 320 6364 (w)	(02) 320 6072 (w)
David Millar	Secretary	(02) 796 8526 (h)	(02) 320 6075 (w)
Arthur White	Treasurer, ENDFROGS consult.	(02) 599 1161 (h)	(02) 599 1161
Harald Ehmann	ENDFROGS coord. / data / ed.	018-257 585	(08) 270 3280
Giselle Howard	<i>FROGCALL</i> ed., Membership Sec.	(02) 897 5066 (h)	(02) 897 5050 (h)
Philip Green	Schools	(043) 882 321	(043) 883 909
Frank Lemckert	Field trips	(02) 487 4345 (h)	(02) 871 6941 (w)
Michael Mahony	ENDFROGS consultant	(049) 772 773 (h)	(049) 216 923 (w)
Jacquie Recsei	Catering	(02) 476 2853	(02) 476 2853
Karen Thumm	Media	(02) 482 1017	(02) 482 1017



Only the paper is old in *Frogcall*

Love to the Australian Museum, for the postage.
 Your FATS Group



THE NEXT MEETING
is one week later than usual.

Don't be an Easter bunny.
Don't turn up on Good Friday!