

# FROG CALL



THE FROG AND TADPOLE  
STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC.  
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**FRIDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST 2002** at the AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, WILLIAM ST ENTRANCE  
**6.30 PM for a 7.30 PM start**

**Membership Cards** This year all members will receive a FATS membership card. Please carry the card with you to all FATS events. It entitles you all FATS activities (and some non-FATS ones as well). Without the card you may not get the price discounts and other benefits of being a member. Also, remember to sign the card before you put it away in your wallet or purse.

Come and join the FATS committee, no experienced required. See Arthur, Karen, or Wendy to indicate your interest before the AGM.



## MEETING FORMAT for 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2002

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 6.30 pm | Lost frogs needing homes are ready for FATS members with amphibian licences.                   |
| 7.30 pm | Welcome and Annual General Meeting.  |
| 8.00 pm | Main Speaker: Trent Penman<br>Radio-tracking Giant Burrowing Frogs in Southern New South Wales |
| 8.45.   | Arthur White: A Second Species of Toad reaches Australia                                       |
| 9.15.   | 5 Favourite Slides (Please bring along any froggy slides that you would like to show)          |
| 9.30    | Auction and drawing of door prize  |
| 9.45    | Tea and Coffee   |

## CONTENTS

The Last meeting, guest speakers: Karen Thumm	
The Red Crowned Toadlet p2&11	
Arthur White Chytrid in NZ p11	
Nicole Barbe	
Bell Frogs at Cronulla p11	
Field Trips	
compiled by Robert Wall p2	
Frog Profile Marion Anstis	
Giant Burrowing Frog p2	
Vanishing frogs of the northern NSW escarpment Robert Bender p4	
Declines and the climate p6	
Tadbits and Frogpieces p7	
And then there were.....	
By Craig Cleeland p8	
Frog Rescue One year on	
SOFAR p9	
Froglog - Africa p10	
Kooragang Island panel p10	
Victorian Herp Group p11	
Committee Contacts	
& Field trips p12	

## THE LAST MEETING 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2002

Arthur White opened the meeting and welcomed visitors, new members and regular attendees. Members are reminded that FATS runs entirely on voluntary labour. We encourage you to join the new committee to be elected at our AGM 7.30pm Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2002. Don't be shy.

September is biodiversity month.

Karen Thumm provided guests at the packed Hallstrom Theatre with excellent news that the application to remove the Red Crowned Toadlet from the Threatened Species List had been refused. We were entranced by excellent slides of this black and white marbled tummy frog that fits easily on a 20 cent piece. This Toadlet is strongly associated with sandstone. It's breeding sites often conflict with fire trails, fire hazard burnoffs and urban development of ridgetops and escapements.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

IT'S SHOWTIME !

IT'S FROGTIME !

IT'S FIELD - TRIPS TIME !



It's spring and the frogging season is upon us. All around Sydney frogs are emerging from their wintery haunts.

To coincide with this auspicious annual event, the FATS Committee is proud to announce details of its new field trips programme.

Come along and get a taste of real frogging. Get your hands dirty and learn how to find and identify the frogs of the Sydney region. Learn something of the behaviour of these charismatic little bushland dwellers.

We have recruited our best froggers to lead our new Spring / Summer programme. Evening field trips will be held monthly at locations right across the Sydney region. We will, of course, continue to schedule our two, ever-popular, week-end trips to Smiths Lake. We may even plan a few surprise events through-out the year! Look for the insert in this edition of FROGCALL. Stick it on the fridge for your year-round frogging calendar. More details can be found on the back page of the newsletter. Our Field Trips Co-ordinator will be pleased to answer any further enquiries you may have.

Come along and support this exciting new FATS initiative!

SEE YOU THERE !

## Frog Profile



Scientific Name: *Heleioporus australiacus*

Common Name: Giant Burrowing Frog

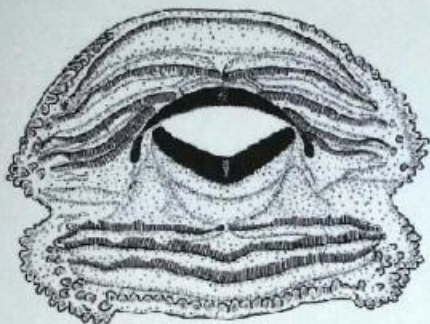
Status: Threatened

**Distribution:** The Giant Burrowing Frog was once a lot more common than it is today, as along its scattered distribution from the Watagan State Forest just north of Sydney to north-eastern Victoria, it favours areas often populated by humans such as the sandstone areas of the Sydney Basin and other heathland and forest areas. Frog populations have been threatened by general habitat encroachment and destruction, pollution of the once pure creeks in which they commonly breed and by the draining of swamps and other waterways in the name of 'development'. The populations in the far south may one day be named as a separate species if genetic studies indicate that they are distinct.



**Description:** This is a marvelous frog - a big, fat, black burrower with huge grey eyes (vertical pupil) and a striking yellow stripe (often pink in metamorphs) below the large tympanum. Some specimens have yellow spots along the sides of the body and on the forearms. The back is usually black, lightening a little to grey over the sides and limbs. The skin is very granular and this is very obvious along the sides of the belly, where there are numerous small whitish or at times yellow bumps. The belly is whitish grey with granular areas.

Frogs grow to 9 or 10 cm and the males have big forearms with sharp spines and nodules along the thumbs. The dorsal surface of the thighs have a raised gland. Juveniles recently metamorphosed



have smoother skin and gradually develop the yellow and white granulation and markings over the sides as they grow.

**Behaviour:** Giant Burrowing Frogs, as their name tells us, like to burrow during the day where they avoid drying out while they sleep. They do not come out every night and are less active during winter, but males will call in suitable weather often after rain, during spring to autumn. They eat insects with a fondness for beetles, mealworms and cockroaches. They also eat spiders and even baby mice in captivity. Juveniles enjoy termites and mealworms.

The male call is a high, soft, repeated "oop - oop - oop", readily distinguished from all other frogs in eastern Australia. Males call in water near their burrow or inside it. They can be quite aggressive if another male approaches.

**Eggs and Tadpoles:** The eggs are laid in a large floating foam mass and usually hidden in a burrow such as that made by yabbies, or well hidden amongst vegetation at the sides of creeks and sometimes ponds. They are black above and white below and quite large (3 mm diameter). There are usually 700 to about 1300 eggs in a single mass. When the embryos hatch they are about 10 mm long and have long external gills and a big yolk sac.

Tadpole life lasts from 3 to 11 months before the young frogs emerge from the water and many tadpoles grow to full size before very much limb development takes place. They often overwinter, lazing around at the bottom of still water ponds, grazing on detritus and leaf litter and any dead insects or other matter. They are large and plump (up to about 8 cm in length) and are black or grey above, usually with a blue sheen over the belly and sides.

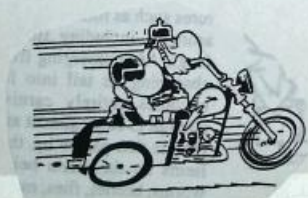
The mouth is large and indented (emarginate) at each side. There are 5-6 upper tooth rows (usually 5) and three lower ones, divided as shown in the drawing below. Small papillae surround the disc, except for a wide gap along the top edge.

**Predators:** Black snakes and goannas are known to eat the adults and possibly foxes and cats may also take their toll. Metamorphs are much easier prey and the tadpoles sometimes have chewed tails, presumably as a result of yabby, fish or the aquatic stage of some insects such as Dragonflies. Black snakes have been observed eating tadpoles of some species, so it is likely they may also eat tadpoles of Giant Burrowing Frogs. Water dragon lizards are another likely predator, but this has yet to be observed.

**Text and illustrations by Marion Anstis**

**References:**

Anstis, M. (2002) Tadpoles of South-eastern Australia: a guide with keys. New Holland Press  
 Daly, G. (1996) Observations on the Eastern Owl Frog *Heleioporus australiacus* in New South Wales. Herpetofauna Vol. 26 No. 1  
 Lemckert, F. (1998) Recent records of the Giant Burrowing frog (*Heleioporus australiacus*) from the far south coast of NSW. Herpetofauna Vol. 28 No. 1



# Vanishing frogs of the northern NSW escarpment

**E**arthwatch Institute has for the last 3 years been supporting a team from Uni. of Newcastle in monitoring populations of *Mixophyes* (Barred Frogs) at various sites in national parks along the eastern escarpment of the Great Dividing Range between Newcastle and the Queensland border. I joined the third team for the 2001-2 summer program. We assembled at the university Biological Sciences laboratory to meet team leader Michael Mahony and his research assistants, Harko Werkman, Karen Thumm and Andrew Stauber. After an introductory talk from Michael while we sat around the many trays of tadpoles on the lab bench, we were off in a convoy of 3 vehicles plus a trailer with camping gear to Barrington Tops N.P., on the northern slopes of the Hunter Valley, starting at Chichester, camping in a State Forest.

*Michael Mahony takes Earthwatching teams  
Out frogging remote mountain streams.  
Through pools they all splash  
And watch for the flash  
Of frogs' eye-shine in head-torches' beams.*

The team of 10 included 5 from UK, 1 from USA, 1 from Dubai and 3 Australians; 4 women and 6 men. There was a good age-mix, from mid-20s to late 60s, and a mix of experiences, some having had bush camping holidays all their lives, others very much city people with anxieties about spiders and snakes. The first few days we sweltered in temperatures close to 40°C, so the big pools near our campsites were much appreciated.

Most nights we were out frog-collecting, helping Michael and Harko with mark-recapture studies to determine population size in the creeks being surveyed.

We spotted them using calls made in response to either a tape recording broadcast through a megaphone or in response to our amateur efforts to imitate male frog calls, or eye-shine from our head-torches. Occasionally someone spotted a frog leaping when it should have sat still, and nabbed it.

*At Barrington Tops National Park  
Some strange things occur after dark.  
'stead of tucked in our beds  
We put lights on our heads  
And wander about saying "Wark!"*



*Mixophyes balbus, (Stuttering Frog) Barrington Tops.*

Most frogs had been captured before, and had been micro chipped, so when a scanner was placed by a frog, a bar code appeared on its little screen. Some frogs were captured for the first time. Capturing them sometimes involved just walking a couple of metres, but others were far up steep slippery slopes requiring nimble people not scared of heights to scramble up and bag them. Each frog was measured for snout-vent length, head width and forearm length (tibio-fibula), and weighed in a little plastic bag using a spring balance, so one of the team was recorder for the evening. Reflective fluorescent markers had been attached to the streamside trees each 10 metres, so we could record fairly precise positions for each frog, to compare them with their positions at previous captures.

*A micro-chipped frog from the stream  
When bagged by the Earthwatcher team  
Has its code number scanned  
While it's held in the hand  
As part of our survey regime.*

With one of the research team in the lead, another bringing up the rear, we wandered along the margins of streams drying out in the late summer drought, uttering our little efforts at frog calls, watching for pythons and Rough-scaled Snakes, sleeping birds, and fungi, and sometimes saw frogs. At Chichester we were after tadpoles which had been dye-marked at the base of their tails by Harko, a daytime walk along the 100 m. transect, capturing tadpoles in little nets so Harko could examine them for presence/absence of the little coloured dye spot, and learn something about their movements: do they move from one pool to another or remain all their lives in the pool where they hatched?

*Netting taddies in mountain streams clear  
Is a pastime that Harko holds dear.  
Out on night-time transects  
'midst loud calls of insects,  
But would rather be drinking cold beer*

After dark we returned to the same stream and collected *Mixophyes balbus* (Stuttering Frog). Karen had her two teenage sons with her and Michael had his 8-year-old boy, and between the three of them they probably captured 70% of the frogs, as they are very nimble and experienced at frog-spotting. Steven Mahony also tirelessly captured cicadas, skinks, and other little animals to show the new Australians.

We passed many little ferns on the stream banks, most of which had little Leaf-green Tree Frogs *Litoria phyllochroa* (or the closely related species *L. barringtonensis* which looks very similar but has a multitude of tiny dark spots on its back). And there were a few Lesueur's Frogs (*Litoria lesueuri*) whose eye-shine gave them away.



The Rocky River Frog, *Litoria lesueuri*.

*M. balbus, a rather large frog,  
In streams that they once used to clog,  
Are now become rare  
So the streams are near bare  
Of this once-common Stuttering Frog*

After two nights at Chichester we moved camp to the other end of Barrington, at Gloucester, to repeat the process, still after *M. balbus* on our night walks. So we spent two days at most camps, and much time was spent putting up and taking down tents, dining marquee, tables and the multitude of plastic tubs holding utensils and food. Some of the team were keen bird-watchers, and never tired of identifying species – currawongs, rosellas, kookaburras, wrens, owls, honeyeaters and many others. One man from the UK has spent much of his life photographing Dragonflies and Mayflies and added several to his repertoire on this trip.

As the summer had been very dry, what used to be running streams were reduced to disconnected puddles, which restricted frog movement and made life fairly tough. One pool we passed had a large trout, and no tadpoles, which had probably all been food for the trout, showing how vulnerable frog populations are to introduced fish.

Every couple of days Michael gathered the group in a circle and gave us a lecture about frog biology and the problem of vanishing frog species, its history and the various attempts to find the cause so an effective response can be developed. Sometimes these talks were interrupted by the camp lyrebird wandering by, or the camp goanna wiggling through our midst, so everyone brought out cameras and the talk was briefly suspended, like a commercial break on television. At Gloucester we had an afternoon excursion to Gloucester Tops bush track and one of the beautiful waterfalls in the area.

During the lazy afternoons, chores had to be done, such as updating card files on each frog's history. We bleached our boots in a bucket on leaving each camp, to avoid spreading fungal disease.

On day 5 we had a long drive to Woolgoolga, just north of Coffs Harbour, to stay in the campground and have hot showers, then spend the evening walking another transect at Bucca Bucca Creek, spotting a nocturnal echidna out foraging for insects as well as many *Mixophyes iteratus* (Striped Barred Frog). Some of these were captured in response to our Wark! calls (young Steven's high-pitched

our Wark! calls (young Steven's high-pitched attempts at a bass frog call were very amusing!) More often the boys turned up Red-eyed Green Tree Frogs (*Litoria chloris*) and a couple of Tusked Frogs (*Adelotus brevis*). Much of the time we struggled to untangle ourselves from Lawyer Vine, a nasty vine with barbed hooks (once you are in its clutches, it's very difficult to escape – a bit like dealing with lawyers)

*The well-brought-up frogs all say "Wark!"  
They do it each night after dark;  
But some of them utter  
A guttural stutter  
And never quite learn how to Wark!*

At Bruxner Flora Reserve near Coffs Harbour we splashed along a stream looking for frog egg masses. After a day off exploring Dorrigo N.P. and its beautiful Visitor Centre and Rainforest Walk, our next stop after another long drive was at Washpool N.P. There we splashed along a 600 metre transect watching for eye-shine of *M. iteratus* again, as well as more pythons, a Rough-scaled snake and a Myotis bat that kept whizzing past our heads chasing insects. After one pair of frogs was found in amplexus, the nearest tree was tagged and we returned next morning to see if there were any evidence of frogs successfully mating despite the dry weather, and found the eggs under a bank.

The egg mass was collected, the eggs counted, and for much of the afternoon we peered down a binocular microscope watching the egg cells divide with amazing speed as the blastocysts developed. We then had a night of spotlighting while bumping along a bush track in a 4WD, spotting Grey-headed Flying Foxes feeding high in eucalypts and some Mountain Brushtail Possums.

After only one night at Washpool we moved on to Yabba N.P. and hunted for *Mixophyes fasciolatus*, then one night at Border Ranges N.P. searching for *M. fleayi*. Wherever we went there were multitudes of Red-eyed Green Tree Frogs.

*Out measuring frogs Andrew went,  
Taking spring-balance weights his intent;  
He'd the calipers place  
Either side of its face,  
And then from its snout to its vent.*

Ten days of outward travels and three days back, with another night at Woolgoolga and a visit to Bruxner Park stream to survey it again and a final dash to Watagans NP south of the Hunter valley to do a quick survey for *M. fasciolatus* along a very difficult, steep, slippery stream with multitudes of leeches and a very long walk in and back. We finished up helping Karen search for Red-backed Toadlets (*Pseudophryne coriacea*) along a damp road verge well buried under leaf litter for her post-grad work.

*The Pseudophryne Karen studies is leathery,  
Not the slightest bit furry or feathery;  
Doesn't fart, burp or belch,  
But politely says "Squelch!"  
Little groups holding converse togethery.*

Our last night was spent at the big campground in Watagans, guitar and songs around the campfire, then packing up in the rain next morning. A short drive to Michael's house for a shower and lunch, farewells and we all went our separate ways after two weeks of frogging at 5 beautiful national parks and learning much about the problems of frog declines and extinctions. **Robert Bender**  
**Victorian Frog Group, In the Spotlight,**  
**Vol 7 No. 2** Many thanks to Craig Cleeland, as well, for passing this on to FATS

## DECLINES AND THE CLIMATE

**I** am very glad to see that science is finally starting to support the theory that amphibian declines are likely to be climate change induced, and the diseases and disorders which cause the deaths are the symptoms of the climatic stress not the actual cause of the problem. It's been a bit too long in my opinion for people to continue to believe that all these different diseases suddenly and coincidentally sprang up in amphibian populations around the world, and were still prepared to not

include the amphibian declines in with the coral bleaching, phytophthora induced plant die backs, and both altitudinal and geographical range shifts in so many species. The most obvious scenario was actually the first proposed ie that it was a global phenomenon with a global cause (as opposed to individual diseases and disorders) – climate change (then called the Greenhouse Effect) and increased UV were some of the earlier suggestions of causes too. Anyway, enough ranting, I'm just pleased that supporting evidence is now appearing for what I've always thought was the case. **Martyn Robinson**

# TADBITS AND FROGPIECES

## NEW JOURNAL

**P**lease the see web site for the new journal "Applied Herpetology" at: <http://www.ahailey.f9.co.uk/appliedherpetology/aims.htm>. The site is brand new and will be added to in time, but the journal is now accepting papers for publication. Stan A. Orchard

## CANADA

**J**ust wanted to let people know that the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Network will be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 12\_16 September, 2002. Details should be added to the website: [http://eqb\\_dqe.cciw.ca/partners/carcnet/annualmeeting.html](http://eqb_dqe.cciw.ca/partners/carcnet/annualmeeting.html) as they fall into place. Bruce D. Pauli  
Canadian Wildlife Service National Wildlife Research Centre TEL: 819 953 2634

## GREAT BRITAIN

**F**ederation of British Herpetologists \_ newly formed to fight RSPCA and others re reptile laws \_ website at: [http://www.f\\_b\\_h.co.uk/](http://www.f_b_h.co.uk/) This is relevant to reptile people outside the UK as well as the situation in the UK is likely to be repeated elsewhere including Australia. Check out the website at: [http://www.f\\_b\\_h.co.uk/](http://www.f_b_h.co.uk/) and where possible lend support to them. If the "anti" herp groups get a successful beachhead in the UK, their campaigns against keepers and other forms of the science of herpetology will intensify.

## COLLECTORS ENDANGER AUSTRALIA'S MOST THREATENED SNAKE.

**T**he Broad\_Headed Snake *Hoplocephalus bungaroides*. The collection of reptiles for the pet trade is often called a potential problem for threatened species, but quantitative data on the effects of this trade on wild populations are lacking. In South\_Eastern Australia the decline

of the threatened broad\_headed snake *Hoplocephalus bungaroides* has been blamed on habitat destruction, and the collection of snakes for pets, but there was little evidence to support the latter hypothesis. During 1992\_2000 we studied one of the last extant southern populations of broad\_headed snakes in Morton National Park, New South Wales, where <600 individuals remain on a isolated plateau. Analysis of 9 years of mark\_recapture data reveal that the activities of snake collectors seriously endanger the viability of this species. The study population of *H. bungaroides* was stable over 1992\_1996, but decline dramatically in 1997, coincident with evidence of illegal collecting, possibly stimulated by a government amnesty that allowed pet owners to obtain permits for illegally held reptiles. Survivorship analyses revealed that 85% of adult females disappeared from the population in 1997. There was no such effect on male survivorship, suggesting that snake collectors selectively removed adult females, which are the largest snakes in the population. Humans caused significant damage to fragile rock outcrop in three of the nine years of the study, and a second bout of decline in the *H. bungaroides* population. We recommend that locked gates be placed on fire trail to protect existing populations of broad\_headed snakes. Jonathan K. Webb, Barry W. Brook and Richard Shine 2002 FFI Oryx 36(2), 170\_181 NB. FATS members may wish to help support this recommendation. Further details at August meeting. HerpDigest Inc. is a non\_profit, 501 (c) (3), corporation that publishes the free, electronic weekly newsletter called HerpDigest, and runs the website under the URL [www.herpdigest.org](http://www.herpdigest.org). To find an article previously published in HerpDigest just search the Archives on the website. If you have any suggestions, articles or announcements you wish to see posted in HerpDigest please contact the editor at [asalzberg@herpdigest.org](mailto:asalzberg@herpdigest.org). TO SUBSCRIBE Go to [www.herpdigest.org](http://www.herpdigest.org) for instructions

**AND FOR A LAUGH...** So a guy, with what looks like a frog on his head, walks up to a bartender. So the bartender asks, "What is that thing?", and the frog says, "I don't know \_ it started out as a pimple on my butt." Stan

And then there were .....

**A**lthough I made every effort to get to bed early the night before, it was of little use. The excitement of the pending day's events made sleep little more than wishful thinking and when the alarm clock finally announced the approaching dawn it was with relief, rather than the usual angst, that I reached across to turn it off.

It is only a few hours drive from A.N.U in Canberra to Kosciusko and at that time in the morning there was little more than me and the morning dew on the roads. I made it to a small researchers hut just below the summit of Kosciusko in time for breakfast with Dave Hunter and his survey crew. Dave, for the last few years, has been monitoring populations of the Corroboree Frog, *Pseudophryne corroboree* and has been a critical part of the recovery team set up to help this highly endangered species. Unfortunately the news thus far was not good, on the proceeding days the survey team had turned up very few frogs but expectations were still high, for today we were going out to the second largest remaining known population of frogs.



Research Hut, Kosciusko National Park.

It had been a very late summer up on the high plains (although those of us that live around Melbourne might lament missing a summer all together) and the wildflowers were in full bloom. While I was, of course, up there to see Corroboree Frogs I could not help but get caught up in the splendor of the herb fields with all manner of flowering plants stretching as far as the eye could see.

Wilderness areas of the N.P still support a staggering diversity of wild flowers



While I have been frog hunting on many occasions and am quite accustomed to wandering around making the sound of a particular frog in order to get it to call back to me, it was with some surprise how self-conscious I felt wandering through the alpine bogs yelling 'Hey Frog' at the top of my voice. Never the less after a short while I too joined in the chorus of 'Hey Frog' and was rewarded eventually when my first Corroboree Frog responded.



Above: Walking through the wilderness yelling Hey Frog is perhaps one of the more odd moments of my life.

We walked for many kilometres hearing only the odd frog here and there.

Where are all the Corroboree Frogs?





Dave Hunter records information on each calling Corroboree Frog

At last Dave announced our arrival at 'the site' and we quickly spread out over the bog, taking it in turns to yell the now all too familiar 'Hey Frog' chant. Excitement however turned to dismay as the 26 or more frogs recorded here just the year before was reduced to the grand total of eight calling males, with four of those around a single pond (picture right).

A few of us stood around this one particular pond and I couldn't help thinking is this the last time I will ever hear this animal in the wild? It was an incredibly moving experience standing out in the middle of this large alpine bog, listening to the last chorus this population may ever muster.



I never did see a Corroboree Frog that day, but some how it just didn't seem to matter.

By Craig Cleeland Victorian Frog Group, In the Spotlight, Vol 7 No. 2

#### FROG RESCUE ONE YEAR ON - SOFAR

In the past 12 months 29 frogs and 9 tadpoles have been rescued by SOFAR. The tadpoles were *Litoria aurea* that had been innocently (although illegally) collected from Broughton Island. When it was realised the tadpoles were those of the threatened green and golden bell frog they were quickly handed over to SOFAR. Sadly 2 of the metamorphs died during quarantine as a result of extremely hot weather that overheated their holding tanks, the remaining 7 found a happy home at the Reptile Park.

The majority of rescued frogs have come from Coles and Woolworth's stores where they have been transported here in Queensland bananas. Hence the name 'banana box frogs' or displaced frogs. The rescued frogs included:

- 15 x *Litoria gracilentia* (Dainty Green Tree Frog)
- 4 x *Litoria fallax* (Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog)
- 3 x *Litoria peronii* (Peron's Tree Frog)
- 3 x *Litoria ewingii* (Ewing's Tree Frog)
- 1 x *Litoria rubella* (Red Tree Frog)
- 1 x *Litoria revelata* (Revealed Frog)
- 1 x *Litoria jervisiensis* (Jervis Bay Tree Frog)
- 1 x *Litoria caerulea* (Green Tree Frog)



Not all of the rescued frogs found their way to adoptive homes. The National Parks and Wildlife Service have a 'hygiene protocol for the control of disease in frogs', and SOFAR follows these guidelines in the frog rescue program. Displaced frogs are never to be released back into the wild, as the risk of spreading disease to local frog populations is too great. Displaced frogs undergo a quarantine period of 2 months and after this, if no illness is evident, they are adopted out to a SOFAR member that holds a NPWS frog keepers license. Over the past year 5 frogs have died during quarantine. SOFAR currently has 6 frogs in quarantine. If you are a member of SOFAR, hold a current NPWS frog keepers license, and you wish to adopt a rescued frog, please contact **Dani Lloyd-Prichard** ph (02) 4956 6137, mobile 0407 603 730 or email [danigp@bravo.net.au](mailto:danigp@bravo.net.au) to get your name on the list.

**N**ewsletter of the Declining Amphibian  
Populations Task Force June 2002, Number  
51 Focus on Africa & Asia.

**Africa presents a particular challenge for the DAPTF, because of its enormous size, its high amphibian biodiversity and the chronic shortage of active amphibian researchers working there.**

Two meetings, recently held at Watamu, Kenya, provided an opportunity to review our current state of knowledge ('ignorance' is perhaps a more appropriate word) and to assess the scale of the challenge that Africa presents to us. The first, convened by Simon Stuart and Neil Cox of Conservation International (CI), was a regional workshop of the Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA), an ambitious project that seeks to assign IUCN categories to all of the world's amphibians. The second, organised by Bob Drewes (USA), Kim Howell (Tanzania) and Damiris Rotich (Kenya), was the latest meeting of the African Amphibian Working Group (AAWG).

**Chytridiomycosis Survey in South Africa By Ché Weldon, DAPTF Seed Grant Holder** The first record of chytridiomycosis from South Africa in the African Clawed Frog, *Xenopus laevis* (Speare, 2000) provided the initiative to conduct a risk assessment in the country to determine the occurrence of chytridiomycosis, its geographical distribution and the species of amphibians infected.

As *X. laevis* are still being exported in large numbers from South Africa for scientific research in many countries, we regard *Xenopus* as a high-risk species for the dissemination of chytridiomycosis. This puts amphibians both nationally and internationally at risk of acquiring chytridiomycosis through transmission via *X. laevis*. A study was launched to determine the extent of occurrence of the amphibian chytrid in *X. laevis* in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Numerous populations have been surveyed on a quarter degree grid scale. Tissue samples were collected and histologically examined at Potchefstroom University. In addition we are investigating the extent to which chytrid-infected frogs are being exported while developing mechanisms, in close collaboration with nature conservation authorities, to prevent the dissemination of chytridiomycosis. Archived specimens of *Xenopus* and stream breeding and

high-altitude anuran species are also being examined to determine whether and when the chytrid was introduced to South Africa and neighbouring countries. The survey has confirmed the presence of chytridiomycosis in the Western Cape. Preliminary results indicate that the chytrid is present in *X. laevis* throughout most of the surveyed region. The infected frogs do not show any of the behavioural or clinical symptoms usually associated with the disease, nor has any evidence been found of chytridiomycosis causing population declines in this species. Examination of archived specimens indicates that the chytrid was not introduced in recent years but has been present for more than two decades in central South Africa. No pattern of dissemination can so far be derived from spatial distribution and date of occurrence of positive records. To better understand the epidemiology and distribution of chytridiomycosis we intend to expand our efforts from the sub-continent to include the greater African continent. We invite any working group or individuals who might be interested to cooperate with our initiative to contact us. **Contact: Ché Weldon, School of Environmental Sciences and Development, Potchefstroom University for CHE, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa. drkcw@puknet.puk.ac.za** Reference Speare, R. (2000) Global distribution of chytridiomycosis in amphibians. <http://www.jcu.edu.au/school/phtm/PHTM/frogs/chyglob.htm> Tim Halliday, DAPTF International Director [t.r.halliday@open.ac.uk](mailto:t.r.halliday@open.ac.uk)

#### KOORAGANG ISLAND EXPERT PANEL

**T**here is a meeting of an expert panel and community groups on the 30th and 31st of July to deal with issues raised regarding Green and Golden Bell Frog habitat. Concerns relating to GGBF habitat have delayed works to restore tidal inundation to parts of Kooragang Island. The findings of the expert panel will form the basis of a proposed review of the KWRP Management Plan which will determine the future direction of the rehabilitation project. The aim of the expert panel is to provide a sound basis for managing threatened species in the context of achieving the KWRP aim of rehabilitating, restoring and creating fisheries and other wildlife habitat in suitable sites of the Hunter River estuary. Panel facilitator: Prof Alistair Gilmour Emeritus Professor, Graduate School of the Environment, Macquarie University Panel members: Dr Hal Cogger Frog biologist; School of Applied Sciences, Central Coast Campus, The University of Newcastle Dr Jane Roberts Wetland ecologist; consultant, Canberra Dr David Roshier Avian biologist (waterbird specialist); Research Fellow, Johnstone Centre, School of Science & Technology, Charles Sturt University Dr Ron West Fish biologist; Associate Professor. Environmental Science, Univ. of Wollongong

Hopefully a good outcome for the Frog's and bird,s and the KWRP Brad McPherson Society of frogs and reptiles From: "SOFAR Society of Frogs and Reptiles" [sofar44@hotmail.com](mailto:sofar44@hotmail.com)

**T**his group was formed to provide some structure for dealing with a range of research and management issues relating to Victorian herpetofauna. The group, administered from the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, includes people from several organisations (government, universities, consultants etc.). Briefly, the role of the group includes the following:

- Providing comments/direction on a range of scientific/management/research etc. issues related to herpetofauna in Victoria Providing input into the preparation and implementation of management documents such as Action Statements; Flora and Fauna Guarantee nominations for threatened species, communities and threatening processes; recovery plans; enviro impact statements etc. that relate to herpetofauna in Vic.
- Encouraging and maintaining communication, links and networks.
- Providing advice to the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment's permits section, and other parts of the Department.
- Commenting on draft reports/papers

We envisage that, at times, the role of the group may extend beyond Victorian borders, particularly in relation to Victorian taxa that occur in other states.

I currently oversee email dissemination for the group, and would be happy to hear from anyone who may have cause to contact or utilise the group. **Nick Clemann Fauna Ecology Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research Department of Natural Resources and Environment PO Box 137 123 Brown Street Heidelberg, Victoria. 3084 Aust. Ph 61 3 9450 8674 Fax 61 3 9450 8799 Email: [nick.clemann@nre.vic.gov.au](mailto:nick.clemann@nre.vic.gov.au)**



● The endangered spotted tree frog.

**Relief as frog spotted again**  
Border Mail Albany 6 - 1 - 02

A RARE frog thought to be extinct in the Mt Buffalo area has been rediscovered.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment senior flora and fauna officer Mr Glen Johnson said the endangered spotted tree frog had last been recorded in Buffalo Creek in 1983 despite several surveys in the past decade.

"While it appears that only a small breeding population remains along a relatively short section of stream, it gives us great hope for the future of the species," Mr Johnson said.

"It has significantly declined in distribution and abundance and is now only known in 13 populations around Australia.

"The recent surveys conducted by the department and Parks Victoria ventured into remote and difficult sections of Buffalo Creek."

Mr Johnson said ecological studies had identified several threats to the frog population, including introduced trout eating tadpoles and eggs and changes to its habitat.

According to Karen this Toadlet is the most beautiful animal in the world followed by the Giant Burrowing Frog. The Red Crowned Toadlet is a repeat breeder -longer lived-(Iteroparity) as opposed to semelparity meaning breeds only once then dies.

The discussion included descriptions of how tadpoles fed. Exotrophic meaning the tadpole gets nutrients from outside the body eg feeds in pond and Endotrophic meaning tadpole fed by yolk inside the capsule and hatches as a fully developed frog.

Life expectancy for a pair of Red Crowned Toadlets could be 10 years or more. Only 1% of their land laid eggs hatch successfully. These vary in gestation period. There are 47 stages identified in the development of tadpoles. The Toadlet hatches usually between stages 21 to 36. Loss of habitat including bush rock remains a major threat. Thank you Karen for a compelling presentation and great slides.

Nicole Barbé presented a report on the Bell Frog monitoring survey at Cronulla Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Lothar Voigt replayed playschool complete with frog songs and live tadpoles and frogs lent to Aunty ABC for filming.

On a more somber note we were advised that Chyrid is in New Zealand. Arthur reported that four species of native frog stand to be lost possibly in the next eighteen months. Illegally imported frogs may have been the cause of the spread.

The Chyrid test kit is nearly ready however its cost is not known. 70 of the 200 Australian frog species have Chyrid. Some are displaying a resistance where the species have a wide distribution. In NZ the 4 native frogs have a narrow area and are genetically constrained. Consideration is being given to using an off shore island as a refuge.

The evening finished with 3 prizes for our guessing competition being won, followed by coffee and informal conversation in the foyer.

One of our members is inquiring if there is anyone the share the driving from Parramatta / Blacktown / Windsor to attend the FATS meetings. Please contact Monica on 9797 6543 or email [wangmann@tig.com.au](mailto:wangmann@tig.com.au) MW

## FIELD TRIPS

### September 13 - 15 Smiths Lake Camp-Out.

University of N.S.W. Field Studies Centre, Smiths Lake. Leaders : Arthur and Karen White.

The first of this season's camp-outs! This idyllic spot situated in the Myall Lakes region provides the perfect base for our nightly frogging excursions. During the day swim, bushwalk or take part in our famous cricket challenge cup match! Cabin/dormitory style accommodation and camping sites available. All kitchen facilities/ utensils/ crockery supplied. Bookings essential. Nightly fee of \$12 applies. Phone Arthur and Karen White for further details and bookings. (ph. 9599-1161). Note: Limit of thirty people.

### September 21 7-00p.m. Chatswood.

Meet in the carpark at the southern end of Reid Drive, West Chatswood. Leader : David Nelson.

David will show us the remarkable frogging sites that can be found within just a few minutes of a major regional C.B.D. centre. Besides a wonderful selection of frogs, David has also found tortises and sugar gliders at this site. David also has a passion for entomology and we may even be able to persuade him to share his knowledge of the wonderful world of insects!

### October 19 7-00p.m. Hawkesbury Area.

Meet at the kiosk (in Wisemans Ferry Park) at Wisemans Ferry Crossing. Leader : Martin Reuter.

After lengthy representations, Martin has gained permission for FATS members to access private property for tonight's walk. A rare opportunity to see the great diversity of frog species that may still be found in the fast-diminishing rural pockets of the Sydney region. Martin's expertise assures us of a great evening with a good count of frog species.

In the event of uncertain frogging conditions (e.g. prolonged/severe drought, hazardous and/or torrential rain, bushfires etc.), please check with the Field Trip Co-ordinator. Remember! Rain is generally ideal for frogging! Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring sturdy shoes (gumboots where specified), torch, warm clothing and raincoat. Please be judicious with the use of insect repellent. Frogs are very sensitive to chemicals! Your leader is there to help you achieve maximum enjoyment from your frogging experience. Please observe all directions that he/she may give. Children are welcome, however please remember that young children especially can become very excited and boisterous at their first frogging experience. - Please help ensure that the leader is able to conduct the trip to everyone's satisfaction. Unfortunately, due to current insurance requirements, all field trips are strictly for members only. Newcomers are however, welcome to take out membership before the commencement of the field-trip. This situation has been imposed upon us and we regret any inconvenience.

## COMMITTEE CONTACTS

**FROGWATCH HELPLINE 0419 249 728**

**EMAIL [fatsgroupnsw@hotmail.com](mailto:fatsgroupnsw@hotmail.com)**

**WEBSITE [www.fats.org.au](http://www.fats.org.au)**



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Steve Weir	Membership Officer	(02) 9710 6866 (w)	
Martin Reuter	Field Trip Co-ordinator	0245 668376(h) 0429 131111(w)	<a href="mailto:ozyredeye@access1.com.au">ozyredeye@access1.com.au</a>
Lothar Voigt	Publicity / Exhib. Officer	(02) 9371 9129(h)	for fax, phone home number first
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Punia Jeffery	Editorial Panel	(02) 9969 1932	

We hold six informative, informal, topical and practical meetings each year at the Australian Museum, Sydney (William Street entrance).

Meetings are held on the first Friday of every **even month** (February, April, June, August, October and December) at 6.30 pm for a 7:30pm start. **NO MEETINGS ARE HELD ON GOOD FRIDAY so check each newsletter for alternate dates.** Visitors are welcome. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations and in other frog studies, and we produce the newsletter *FROGCALL* and *FROGFACTS* information sheets.

All expressions of opinion and information are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as an official opinion of the Frog and Tadpole Study Group Committee unless expressly so stated.

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Dear FATS member:

Please take photocopies of the reverse side and ask your local shopkeepers to support Frogweek by placing the sheet in their display window.

Should a shopkeeper be interested in also displaying a frog- or tadpole poster or one of the Frogfacts sheets, please see me at the 4.10.02 meeting.

Thank you.

Lothar Voigt

9371 9129 or 0419 249 728



*Paracrinia haswelli* Haswell's frog  
Male on left Female on right  
Smiths Lake field trip  
Photographed by David Nelson

The Frog and Tadpole  
Study Group of NSW  
FATS GROUP

PO Box 296  
Rockdale NSW 2216



# Frogweek 2002

(Frogweek is always the first week in November.)

There will be a free froggy lecture and slide show:

## FROG LUST IN THE DUST

AMAZING FROGS OF THE DESERT

- On Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> November, at 7 pm
- At the Australian Museum, William St. entrance

See beautiful frog photos  
Get information sheets

Chat with others over a coffee  
Listen to talks about frogs

You can also ring us for free information on:

- Frog ponds and frog-friendly gardens
- Frog Rescue Service and frog adoptions
- Cane Toad Alert
- Field trips
- The growing plight of frogs
- What you can do to help

**9371 9129 or 0419 249 728**

Visitors are welcome to our informative and practical meetings. They are held on the first Friday of every even month at 7:30 pm in the Australian Museum in Sydney. Our publications include the bimonthly newsletter Frogcall and the Frogfacts information sheets.

### Major FATS Group activities

#### Endangered Frog Survey:

A study of the habitats, status and conservation of 25 species of "at risk" frogs in NSW. Partly funded through the National Estate Grant Program

#### Frogweek:

First full week every November. Many activities take place to focus public attention and interest in endangered frogs. We encourage much public involvement.

#### Frogmobile:

A demonstration trailer, sponsored by Osram Aust., to support the FATS Group's environmental exhibitions.

#### Frogwatch Helpline:

0419 249 728

#### Cane Toad Alert:

0419 249 728

#### Frog Rescue Service:

0419 249 728

Web site: [www.fats.org.au](http://www.fats.org.au)



*Tadpoles of South-eastern Australia*  
Marion Anstis

To order, just fill out the form below, cut off payment slip and send to:

Frog and Tadpole Study Group  
PO Box 296,  
Rockdale  
NSW 2216

I am a member of FATS and would like to order ( ) copy(ies) of *Tadpoles of South-eastern Australia* by Marion Anstis at a special FATS discount price of \$50 per copy. I include \$8 for postage.

Payment method (please circle):

CHEQUE ATTACHED/POSTAL ORDER



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## FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP

### FIELD TRIPS

Spring / Summer Programme

2002 / 2003



<b>September</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup>		<b>Special Event</b>	Smiths Lake Camp-Out / Field Trip. Leaders : Arthur & Karen White. ( Bookings essential. Contact Karen White ph. 9599 – 1161 )
<b>September</b>	21 <sup>st</sup>	7-00 p.m	Chatswood	Leader : David Nelson
<b>October</b>	19 <sup>th</sup>	7-00 p.m.	Hawkesbury Area	Leader : Martin Reuter
<b>November</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	7-45 p.m	Hornsby Area	Leader : Frank Lemckert
<b>December</b>	14 <sup>th</sup>	8-30 p.m.	Darkes Forest	Leader : Ken Griffiths
<b>January</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>	8-30 p.m.	Long Reef	Leader : Jodi Rowley
<b>February</b>	Date to be	announced	<b>Special Event</b>	Smiths Lake Camp-Out / Field Trip. Leaders : Arthur & Karen White. ( Bookings essential. Contact Karen White ph. 9599 – 1161 )
<b>March</b>	8 <sup>th</sup>	8-00 p.m.	Heathcote	Leader : Steve Weir
<b>April</b>	12 <sup>th</sup>	11-00 a.m.	<b>Special Event</b>	FATSG Picnic Day. Bi-centennial Park.
<b>May</b>			Autumn Recess	
<b>June</b>			Winter Recess	
<b>July</b>			Winter Recess	
<b>August</b>			Winter Recess	



In the event of uncertain frogging conditions ( e.g. prolonged / severe drought, hazardous and/or torrential rain, bushfires etc. ), please check with the Field Trip Co-ordinator

Remember ! Rain is generally ideal for frogging !

Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Bring sturdy shoes ( gumboots where specified ), torch, warm clothing and raincoat.

Please be judicious with the use of insect repellent. Frogs are very sensitive to chemicals !

Your leader is there to help you achieve maximum enjoyment from your frogging experience. Please observe all directions that he / she may give. Children are welcome, however please remember that young children especially can become very excited and boisterous at their first frogging experience. - Please help ensure that the leader is able to conduct the trip to everyone's satisfaction.

Further details of each field trip will be published in the edition of FROGCALL immediately prior to the field trip date.

Unfortunately, due to current insurance requirements, all field trips are strictly for members only. Newcomers are however, welcome to take out membership before the commencement of the field-trip. This situation has been imposed upon us and we regret any inconvenience.

**KEEP THIS CALENDAR HANDY FOR FUTURE REFERENCE !**

