

# FROG CALL



NEWSLETTER No. 76  
April 2005

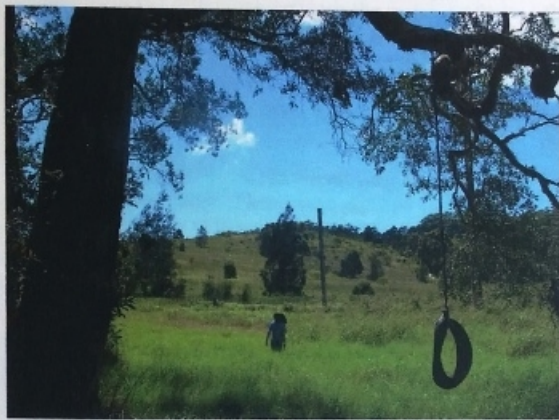
THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC

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Smiths Lake

Photo by Cliff Hobden

You are invited to our next FATS meeting  
at 6.30 pm for a 7.00 pm start

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

*Australian Museum, Sydney, William St entrance*

FATS meetings  
will no longer  
be held on  
Friday nights.



## MEETING FORMAT for 19<sup>th</sup> April 2005

- 6.30 – 7pm A small number of Lost frogs are ready to collect from the Frog Rescue Service. Please bring your FATS membership card and Amphibian Licence.
- 7.15 pm Speakers:- Arthur White, David Nelson, Peter Spradbrow, Martin Harris (WWF) & Thomas Burton
- 8.30 pm 5 Favourite Slides. Anyone wishing to speak about their recent frogging trips or experiences is most welcome to tell all. If you have slides or other images, bring them along as well.
- 8.45 pm Drawing of door prize and light refreshments in the lobby.

*The ADI emergency (photograph below) see page 10 and Website [www.adisite.org](http://www.adisite.org)*



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**A**lan Lane, our main guest speaker, told us about the project he has just completed for his Master of Environmental Science, in which he examined the impact of urbanisation on the abundance and diversity of frogs in the upper Blue Mountains.

Alan followed the frogs in five matched pairs of sites (i.e. 10 sites in all) throughout an entire breeding season (September to February), monitoring the numbers and species of frogs calling and their spawn and tadpoles. He also tested a large number of water samples to get a picture of the difference between the water quality at the two types of habitat. He found the urban sites tended to be highly degraded and polluted, but in spite of this, he found robust populations of 6 species of frogs, with up to 4 species at any one site.

Unexpectedly, however, he found very few frogs at the non-urban sites. These were perched swamps or seepage lines within the National Park. There were no frogs at all at 3 of the sites and the only frog at the other 2 sites was *Crinia signifera*.

Alan concluded that differences in water quality was not the explanation, because the water at the non-urban sites was consistently of very high quality, whereas that in all 5 urban habitats was polluted with sewage and subject to sometimes very high levels of nutrients, suspended matter and faecal bacteria.

Why weren't the frogs he found at the urban sites also in the non-urban sites?

In an attempt to find out, Alan looked at the vegetation characteristics of the two types of habitat, the fire history of the non-urban sites, and factors such as predation, meteorological conditions and rainfall history. None of these explained the absence of frogs from the non-urban sites and he was forced to conclude that he had no satisfactory explanation for his findings, but that it was very worrying, since perched upland swamps are the places where we would expect to find a diversity of frogs.

Why weren't they there? However he also concluded that urban frog habitats are important refuges for frogs and that the municipal authorities should be encouraged to recognise this and protect them.

Alan thanked Arthur for being his co-supervisor and making his project so successful.

After Alan's presentation, Lou Petho reported that his documentary "Still Croaking", starring the Green and Golden Bellfrogs, Arthur White, Graham Pyke and team was to go to air on "Richard Morecroft Goes Wild" on Channel 2 on

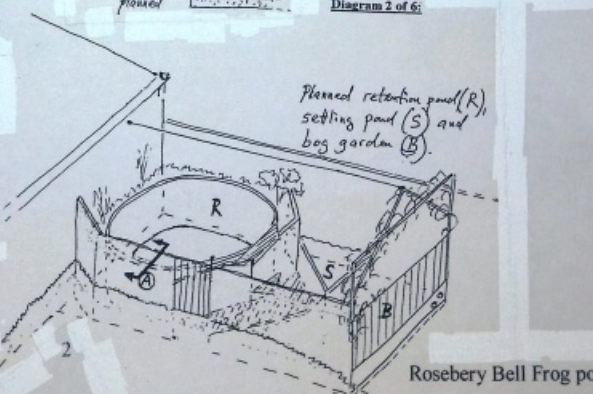
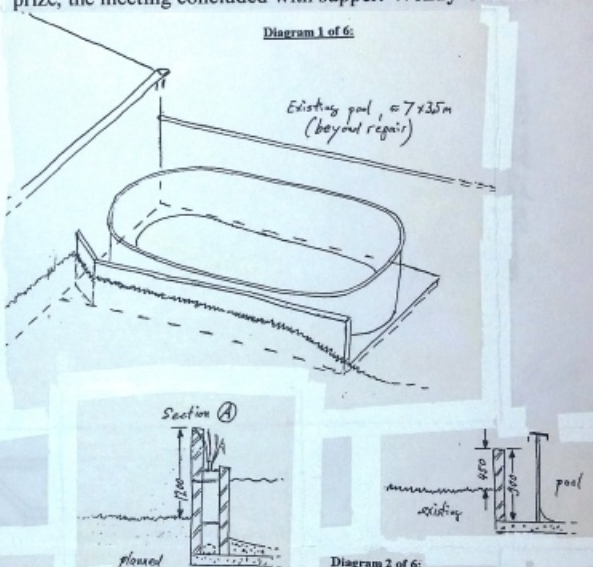
Sat19/2/05. Lou is preparing a DVD that will include the half hour show plus footage taken on FATS field trips.

Our next speaker was David Nelson who took us on his journey through northern NSW, into Queensland to Mackay and then up into PNG for an unrivalled delight of frogs and reptiles in their own environments and cultural settings.

The accompanying maps and frog calls provided an extra dimension to the audience's ability to "appreciate" the trip. The shot of *Assa darlingtoni* sitting on a \$2 coin at Mt Warning (posed) and *Litoria cooloolensis* were inspiration for all of the travellers amongst us. Well done and thanks to David and his field assistants Andrew and Fiorella.

Arthur continued Alan's theme of mountain frogs by describing the genus *Phyloria* and its differentiation and distribution. The mountain frogs are survivors from a wetter past and thus a relic group once wide spread across northern and eastern Australia. With the continental drift of Australia northwards their ranges have been fragmented and speciated as mountain relics. Now 6 described species are in decline and will be replaced in their range by other species moving in. This is probably part of a natural cycle affecting all species.

After this feast of slides, info and discussion; frogs for rescue and plants and frog food for sale and the drawing of the door prize, the meeting concluded with supper. **Wendy Grimm**



## BELL FROG POND UPDATE

You may recall that thanks to our new members Elaine and John, Rosebery is still the home of a thriving population of the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frogs. And that their old above-ground swimming pool, which the frogs took over some 12 years ago, is on the verge of collapsing. And that the frogs need a new pond in its place, and that FATS is helping make it happen.

The FATS working bee is ready to get stuck into it, once the Development Application has been approved and once we have secured the funding. In the meantime, let's have a look at some of the drawings:

The first diagram (page 2) shows the old pool on its 7 x 3.5 m concrete slab. The next one (page 2) explains how it's going to look: There is a 1.2 m high breeding pond, surrounded by an outer wall and with the gap filled and planted up. Part of that gap is filled with rocks, as an overwintering site for the Bell Frogs. The breeding pond doubles up as a storage pond for rainwater from the garage roof. (Rainwater is fine for frog ponds provided you do a few simple things to it.)

There is also a shallow settling pond, in which the sediments from the breeding pond end up all by themselves. (A siphoning system does that. Can't pump the stuff out. It would mangle the taddies and tends to clog up on the leaves and twigs.) And there is a bog garden, the main soaking and foraging and shelter area for the baby frogs. Solar garden lights attract insects, and more are attracted by the grape vine over the pergola.

A cable runs from the top of the pergola to the garage wall, over which bird netting can be thrown, and/or shade cloth as needed. A childproof fence surrounds the lot. Striped Marsh Frogs can't get into the breeding pond and spoil it for the Bell Frogs. Yes, and we're taking precautions to keep chytrid out as well.

In the next diagram (center right on this page) you can also make out the wooden walkway and the seat. The last pictures (to the right) show various floating islands - all tested out - which rise and fall in the breeding pond. A design requirement for that pond is that it must look good even when it is 3/4 empty; it is a storage pond

after all. Floating islands with tall emergent plants will help hide the bare walls. The islands can't fall over, they can't drift away from the pond walls, and they provide shallows with shelter for small fish and tadpoles.

If the Development Application is not held up by objections and if the funding comes through in time, we could do the whole thing on weekends between mid-June and mid-July. I have sent those terrific FATS working bee people a detailed schedule of what's going to happen day by day. If you would like to do some good and can stand a day or so in the fresh air, I would love to add you to the working bee list, send you the schedule and keep you up to date. Just contact me on [lothar@ihug.com.au](mailto:lothar@ihug.com.au) or (02) 9371 9129 or the Frogwatch Helpline 0419 249 728.

Meanwhile, the baby frogs are growing like you wouldn't believe. On 11. January, Arthur and I scooped a few large netfuls of tads and metamorphs out of the leaking pool. With the blessings of NPWS, we are raising these rescuees in lots of cages, to be returned to the same site. Many of them (like dozens and dozens of them) are now at least 40 mm long, and on 10. April the first one started calling! And they're always ravenous. L.V.

Diagram 3 of 6:

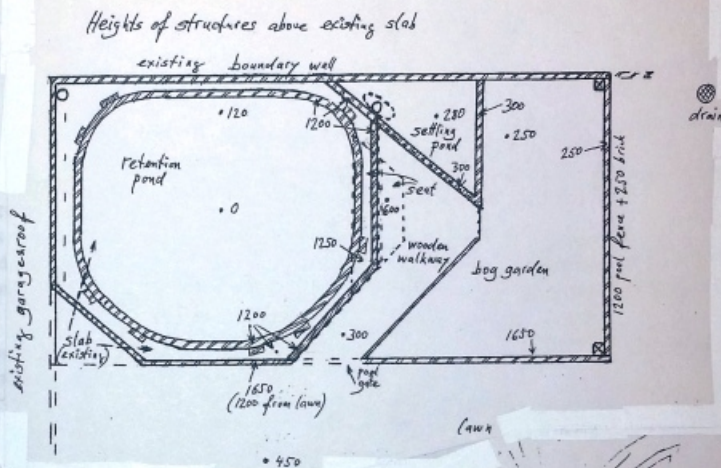
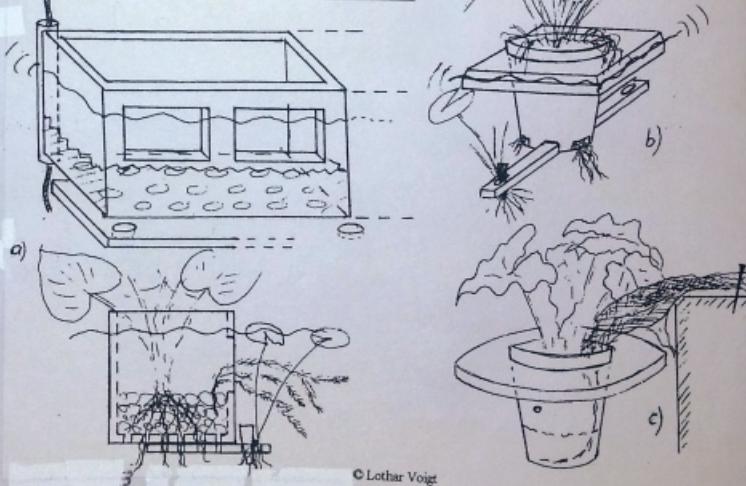


Diagram 6 of 6:



## FUNDS SHORTFALL

### FORCES FROG HOSPITAL TO CLOSE



**Green clients:** The hospital cares for up to 200 frogs at a time. [File photo]ABC A lack of funds has forced Australia's only frog hospital and disease surveillance group to shut its doors after six-and-a-half years of operation.

The founder of the Cairns Frog Hospital, Deborah Pergolotti, is calling on governments to take responsibility for the service. Ms Pergolotti and a small group of volunteers run the hospital from her two-bedroom home, caring for up to 200 sick frogs at a time. Yearly expenses for the hospital, which does not receive any government assistance, come to more than \$12,000.

Ms Pergolotti says too many people see the hospital as a free pet care service and insist diseased and/or injured frogs be returned to them after treatment.

"When your bank account gets down to less than 10 bucks in it and your expenses are \$400 a week, the decision [to close] is pretty much made for you," she said.

#### Diseases

One of the group's main functions is to monitor and catalogue various frog diseases in an area that spans from Townsville to Cape York.

Ms Pergolotti says the costs have been increasing because the diseases they deal with are new and unrecognised diseases that have not been fully isolated.

That makes them difficult to treat.

"The best conservation outcome for an animal in that circumstance is to send it to frog experts at the lab so that we can learn something about these diseases and how to handle them better," she said.

Ms Pergolotti says they regularly get calls from other parts of Australia about sick frogs.

"We only see the tip of the iceberg as far as what is actually diseased," she said.

She says \$100,000 to \$200,000 is needed to perform the base laboratory work on the diseases.

Ms Pergolotti says disease surveillance should be the Government's responsibility since government departments can get the necessary funding and direct it to the laboratories, whereas her hospital cannot.

"At the moment the way we are treated we are the first, last and only line of inquiry for the new diseases that are turning up," she said.

"That is not normally something that should be done by a community group in isolation.

"What is the point of having a quarantine service or a Cooperative Research Centre if when exotic disease come into the country the Government doesn't want to know about it because it's just wildlife?"

#### Public response

Public donations for the hospital and its larger entity, the Frog Decline Reversal Project (FDRP), have been minimal. Ms Pergolotti says she believes this is because people view frogs as being "too far down the chain".

"So they'll help a baby bird or they'll help a wallaby hit by a car but when it comes down to an injured snake on a road or a sick frog that's below the line," she said.

At the moment the group has 70 adult frogs - the least they have had in the last three years - and is looking at returning them to the wild when they are well enough. Ms Pergolotti says the group will continue to lobby the government sector for funding. **18 March 2005.**

[http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/200503/r43169\\_110789.jpg](http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/200503/r43169_110789.jpg)  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/items/200503/1327011.htm>

#### Arthur White & the Sydney rescued frogs (see page 5)





Photo by Adam Hollingworth

## FROGBITS & TADPIECES

### DARK COLOURED ICECREAM CONTAINERS NEEDED

**I** don't eat ice cream myself any more. If you have any dark coloured containers with lids, could you bring them in to the next meeting on Tuesday? The FATS frogs and the rescued frogs in the large cages are eating huge amounts of flies mostly, far more than I can fit into styro cups. So I'm going to upsize. (The dark colour just gets the flies to crawl out a bit sooner.) My dogs still eat ice cream but they get sick from it. So I have to rely on you folks. See ya Lothar reply to [lothar@ihug.com.au](mailto:lothar@ihug.com.au) or just bring a few in, please. Many thanks.  
P.S. - I'm always short of flyscreen, too.

### FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Next Frogmobile appearance at Centennial Park: Sunday 24 April, 11 am – 4 pm.

A correction to last FrogCall: The ABC radio thing with Simon Marnie is after the 10 am news, Sunday, 17 April.

### Frog Wrangler Time

There's a FATS and frogs segment on Radio 2RRR (88.5 FM) every Friday - usually a ten minute spot for the Frog Wrangler, in their amazing 3 pm environmental programme "A Question of Balance". That segment is now also syndicated to 30 other community radio stations around Australia. "Frog Wrangler Time" is advertised every month in the Community Radio Network Newsletter. You can get it online at [www.cbaa.org.au](http://www.cbaa.org.au) - type "frog" into their search box.

And don't miss the Frogmobile on Sunday, 24 April at our usual place in Centennial Park. Lothar [lothar@ihug.com.au](mailto:lothar@ihug.com.au) 9371 9129 or Frogwatch Helpline 0419 249 728 [www.fats.org.au](http://www.fats.org.au)

## ABOUT TO CROAK? CALL THE FROGMOBILE

**B**ack on the hop ... Arthur White at the home he shares with hundreds of rescued frogs in Rockdale yesterday. More than 40 of almost 70 frog species in NSW are listed as threatened or endangered.

Back on the hop ... Arthur White at the home he shares with hundreds of rescued frogs in Rockdale yesterday. More than 40 of almost 70 frog species in NSW are listed as threatened or endangered.

Time was running out for Claude the green tree frog. He had been hit by a car and was lying by the roadside, his bones broken, his abdomen torn and his legs dangling "like spaghetti". As his life slipped away a bystander called the frog and tadpole hotline. Rescuers took Claude to a vet, who stitched him up, amputated his legs and fitted a plastic pelvis with two tiny wheels attached.

"He could still hunt for food but he couldn't hop anymore," said Arthur White, a self-described "mad frogger" and president of the Frog and Tadpole Study Group of NSW. "He lived for another three or four years."

The group rescues more than 1500 frogs a year in NSW, where more than 40 of almost 70 species are listed as threatened or endangered. Its 500-odd members save and rehabilitate injured and stranded frogs, taking them to vets in Sydney who do everything from making prostheses to fixing broken legs with tiny splints. They run a 24-hour hotline and volunteer to be on call overnight in case of an emergency, such as a cane toad sighting.

Some, like Dr White, run quarantine stations in their homes so frogs that accidentally hitch rides to Sydney do not have to be put down as a precaution against disease.

But the group's most important mission is education. Volunteers drive around Sydney in the Frogmobile teaching the public about the key threats to frogs, such as habitat destruction, predatory fish, the highly infectious chytrid fungus and pollution.

"The biggest impact [the group] would have would be on community perceptions about frogs rather than protecting frogs directly," Dr White said. "Basically it relies on the goodwill of the wider community, to alert them to frog issues and support the group in actions of frog conservation in matters such as development and legislation protecting frogs." Every Frogmobile trip creates a few more frog lovers. Converts often decide to adopt survivors of the frog quarantine program as pets, even though the waiting list can be a year long.

"A lot of people like them because they're low maintenance," said Dr White, who began his love affair with frogs as a seven-year-old wandering the swampy golf courses of the eastern suburbs.

"You don't have to feed them every day, you don't have to be constantly worming them, you don't have to fork out lots of money like cats and dogs.

"Most Australian frogs are quite long-lived. Green tree frogs can live up to 30 years. When you get a frog we tell people to think of it as a companion animal for life." By Jordan Bake SMH 3/2005

## FATS FROG FOOD FEEDING FRENZY

**F**ATS needs your help again. The frog food we need can break the bank. Can you breed some up? For the rescued banana box frogs in quarantine, the post-quarantine ones, the Frogmobile ones, the rescued Bell Frogs, the captive-bred White-lipped Tree Frog metamorphs, the Cane Toad? They can easily gobble up over \$100 a month, and that is with bulk wholesale prices and with breeding and catching a few insects ourselves as we go along.

What we need is this: You start a new hobby, breeding mealworms by the kilo. Or crickets or woodies. We can show you how. All we ask is that you keep chytrid out (we can show you how, too) and that you either take them to our meetings or drop them off at the frog base. You don't even need to have frogs yourself, just some storage boxes in a warm place (maybe in a cupboard with a light globe on), and a few minutes twice a week.

Breeding woodies and mealworms is especially easy. And it's so much fun! As the FATS frogs would all agree, they are also delicious.

There is one other thing you could do, but you probably do need to have frogs for this one: Support our fly sale. FATS earns a few modest pennies from bottling up those pupae for you, all done with volunteer labour. If your frogs could eat more flies, then maybe one day we can raise enough to cover the pupae we buy in bulk for the FATS frogs. And then the Frogmobile can be absolutely full of frogs!

If your cage is not fly-proof or if you're not sure how to get the dead flies out, then take heart that you are not alone. These are known problems that have known solutions. And you can always ring the Helpline if you're stuck. L.V.

### FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Su. 17.4. 10 a.m. FATS on ABC Radio 702 with Simon Marnie.

Su. 24.4. 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Frogmobile at Centennial Park, Duck Pond. HELPERS NEEDED.

Su. 5.6. 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Frogmobile at Centennial Park, Duck Pond, HELPERS NEEDED L.V.



Lothar Voigt Frog ambassador

## MORE FROGBITS & TADPIECES

**Ginormous Cane Toad** found in Engadine in February. Handed over to Council officer (who happens to be a FATS member) who got his friend (also a FATS member) to take it to our frog base.



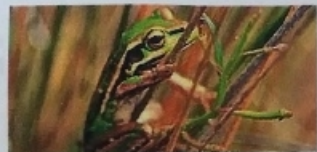
**What a stir** Arthur's wheelchair-bound froggy caused, in that 7.3. SMH Frogmobile article! A Darwin radio station then tracked him down in the field, live, to get it from him all over again. And ABC Newcastle's John Clark quizzed me for ½ hour about FATS and the Helpline, also live, and then the phone kept ringing all day long.

**ABC TV** ran Lou Petho's masterpiece "Still Croaking" on 19.2., under Richard Moorecroft's banner. Congratulations, Lou, on that spectacular Green and Golden Bell Frog documentary, and on that great party at the launch!

**A Daily Telegraph** article about frog ponds may be coming out in the next few days. I will try to let you know when, provided you are on the FATS email list. (To join, simply go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fatsgroupnsw/>.)

**The Cairns Frog Hospital** closed its doors last month. Lack of funding, very sadly, despite whatever FATS could afford over the last few years. Deborah Pergolotti assures us that the Frog Decline Reversal Project and her website [www.fdrproject.org.au](http://www.fdrproject.org.au) will keep going, though.

**The Frogs Australia Network** website is now up and it's huge. You can see it at [www.frogsaustralia.net.au](http://www.frogsaustralia.net.au). You may recall that Rio Tinto funding seeded a fraternisation, if not a conglomeration, of Australian frog groups. The network is intended to be the putty and the common resource, even if not, or not yet, the common song book. L.V.



[www.adisite.org](http://www.adisite.org)

## Scientists back research to contain cane toads



Scientists say Cane Toads have to be contained (Reuters)

Scientists say cane toads have no useful role in the environment and need to be contained. The Queensland Government is committing \$1 million over two years towards preventing the toads from spreading.

Premier Peter Beattie says scientists will work on developing a bait which kills cane toads, without hurting native animals or plants. Tony Peacock from the Australasian Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre in Canberra says cane toads impact on biodiversity. "Ideally you'd love to get rid of the cane toad, it's got no useful role in Australia whatsoever, but realistically in the first instance we've got to try and contain its spread and then at least try and get it out of biodiversity hot spots," he said.

Mr Peacock says cane toads are now found as far away as the Northern Territory-Western Australian border and south into New South Wales.

"It's hard to quantify the cane toad because it doesn't cause specific agricultural problems, but it is certainly a real impact on biodiversity, so it's hard to put dollars on it, but it certainly is leading to species loss," he said. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200503/s1332444.htm> Forwarded by Steve Weir



### They can't go away too soon

Frogs are disappearing, so they say. Well, I just hope they disappear from my neighbourhood — permanently.

A neighbour has an open stormwater drain running through his back property, plus a fishpond at the front, providing havens for these pesky little critters to hold their sex orgies.

We have to close our windows. If left open, a good night's sleep would be out of the question.

Frogs have their place in the overall scheme of things but this place is definitely not in suburban gardens in built-up residential areas.

Thelma Digby, Lane Cove

... Entitled to their place but that place is not in suburbia ... frogs can disturb a good night's sleep

### "They can't go away too soon" – The Daily Telegraph (Letters) – 21.10.04

In this dreadful example of human selfishness, a woman has written to say just how much she'd like frogs to disappear. As if that isn't bad enough – she wrote it in response to a Daily Telegraph feature on how desperately in need of protection frogs are! This occurred around the time of "Frog Awareness Week".

As it happens, I wrote a response and sent it to the paper. It was printed, but with several "juicy bits" edited out. I now present you with the unedited, "juicy" version:

I was mortified in the extreme to read the heartless letter, written by (name withheld). [The writer] says that she hopes frogs disappear from her neighbourhood, as they interrupt her sleep with their "sex orgies".

[Madam], frogs are, in effect, canaries in the mineshaft of ecology. They are a good indication of looming ecological disasters. But due to the mishandling of the environment, and habitat destruction, wrought by people who hold similar contempt for our native treasures, they are disappearing too fast for words.

[Madam], buy a pair of earplugs. Frogs were not only here first, but their thriving in your neighbourhood is a blessing - it means that things are well balanced there - except perhaps in one household. I wonder... Do you own a cat?

**COURT HAS FOUND: WATER FOR RIVERS NOT PRIORITY FOR GOVERNMENT**

**A judgement handed down on Wednesday by the NSW Court of Appeal on a test case run by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW against the NSW Government has confirmed that the Government is not meeting its legal obligations and prioritising water for rivers.**

Despite this finding though, the case, which began in the Land and Environment Court two years ago, was dismissed. "These findings are enough justification for the Minister for Natural Resources to immediately review each and every water sharing plan in the State," said Cate Faehrmann, Director of the Nature Conservation Council.

"The judgement clearly states that the government has reversed its obligations under the Act and prioritised water for irrigation ahead of water for the rivers. "We're dismayed at how this doesn't invalidate the

Gwydir water sharing plan and are considering our legal options. "The National Competition Council has suspended \$26million of NSW competition payments this year because it says that NSW has failed to show how the water sharing plans return enough water to the rivers.

"NSW is the only State which has had its payments docked by the National Competition Council for not giving enough water back to the rivers. "The Nature Conservation Council believes that the Water Sharing Plans produced by the NSW government are utterly inadequate when it comes to protecting the rivers and wetlands of NSW. "At this very moment the internationally recognised Gwydir wetlands are suffering from the poor performance of this current Government, including the loss of 8,000 ibis chicks over the past 2 weeks. For more information contact:

**Cate Faehrmann, Director**  
**Phone: 0412 207 043 / (02) 9279 2466**  
**Email: director@nccnsw.org.au**

**SWAMP** [www.swamp.com.au](http://www.swamp.com.au)

**BY GARY CLARK**

Sunday Telegraph



Smiths Lake field station paddock

Photos by Cliff Hobden





**A Green and Golden Bell Frog** in its natural habitat at Sydney Olympic Park.

## **Bell frogs rule the roost at Sydney Olympic Park. Report EMILY O'KEEFE**

Amid the heavy development going on around Homebush at the moment there remains a cute, little green and gold creature who holds a lot of sway.

The Green and Golden Bell frogs are well remembered for the concern they caused officials before the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The planned venue for the tennis stadium had to be built elsewhere when it was discovered to be one of the frog's local habitats.

Sydney Olympic Park hosts one of the State's largest populations of the bell frog, which was officially named as an endangered species in 1993.

The park's ecosystems manager Kerry Darcovich said a Frog Management Plan, established in 1993, meant the whole park had adopted an integrated approach to caring for the creatures – from its top management down.

"When we get the landscapers in to mow the lawns they go through an induction

process where they are told not to mow into long grass in case of frogs," she said.

The frog's numbers are closely monitored through monthly tadpole egg counts and night-time excursions.

Last week ecologists conducted one of their regular night observation sessions, wading through the park's ponds with a torch from 8 pm to 4 am.

The Green and Golden bell frog is identified through its unique call.

With a croak that has been described as like a "sick chainsaw" or "a motorbike changing gears" it's not hard to miss.

The bell frog's Homebush population had remained steady for the past 10 years, Ms Darcovich said.

In the previous decade, the land around Homebush was largely characterised by industrial waste and landfill. It was the bell frog's penchant for the disturbed areas and young vegetation created through remediation that attracted larger numbers of the

species, Ms Darcovich said.

Curiously, another site in Sydney where the bell frog can be found in significant numbers is the Kurnell Peninsula in Botany, a working industrial area.

But besides an ability to adapt to changing conditions, the bell frog is no more resistant to chemical pollution than any other creature, Ms Darcovich said.

Given Homebush Bay's toxic past and the more recent introduction of high-density housing development, the park's job of maintaining the bell frog's habitat was particularly challenging, she said.

Many of the frog's primary habitats in the park, including the Brickpit, Kronos Hill, Wentworth Common and Narawang Wetland were created for the bell frogs, she said.

The park has recently embarked on an education campaign to raise awareness about the special frog, Ms Darcovich said.

"At the moment we are building an ele-

vated walkway over the Brickpit where people can walk in and take a look at the frogs in their natural habitat," she said. "We hope it will be finished by the end of this year."

An interactive computer program has also been created by the Australian Learning Federation to give school students a chance to learn more about the frog habitats.

Sydney Olympic Park's Director of Education Development Brian Bagshaw said the educational initiative was the first of its kind in Sydney.

"Students take part in online and offline field activities with a scientific focus," Mr Bagshaw said. "They learn about important aspects of maintaining a frog pond habitat in the computer lab and in the field."

The interactive excursions had already attracted more than 1,000 students to the park, he said.

## EMERGENCY ADI SITE MEETING

**The ADI Residents Action Group asks you to attend or promote its next meeting:**

**7.30 pm Thursday, 14th April 2005  
1 Poplar St Nth St Marys**

We will be doing a media release promoting this as an emergency meeting. The emergency is due to the fact that the State Government through DEC (NPWS) is finalising plans to excise large areas of National Estate listed land from the promised 900 ha Regional Park.

In 2001 the feds committed that 828 ha of the site listed in the Register of the National Estate would be set aside for protection. When the dust settled from this announcement the feds and Lend Lease (don't forget they were joint venture partners until last year) in 2002 made public commitments that the 828 ha would be included in a 900ha RP that would be owned and managed by the State Governments NPWS. The Feds would transfer ownership of the 828 ha to the State (not to Lend Lease) see [www.adisite.org](http://www.adisite.org) for more details.

At the same time as they were making these public commitments, the state, the feds (finance department - Nick Minchin) and Lend Lease were putting together a legal development agreement that stated otherwise. This legal agreement added clauses that allowed the NSW NPWS not to accept all 828 ha of RNE lands as RP. Under the agreement any RNE lands they rejected would

remain with the landowner. As Lend Lease now own the ADI Site they may end up owning a huge chunk of the National Estate if NPWS continue with its plans.

In summary a huge chunk of the ADI Site that was meant to remain in public ownership is at threat. The Feds, the State and Lend Lease are equally responsible. This land is significant hence its RNE status (NPWS mapping also lists it as either core or support to core habitat) Elizabeth Farm the residence of Governor Phillip Gidley Kings daughter is within an area of the RNE lands that Lend Lease may end up owning and managing.

I know this campaign has had a fair go over the last 12 years but there are still injustices occurring that need to be challenged.

**Please try to attend this meeting, or write to Diane Beamer, Senator Ian Campbell, Penrith Council and a letter to the Penrith Press (Editor Alison Taylor) [taylora@cng.newsltd.com.au](mailto:taylora@cng.newsltd.com.au)**

The article (below) from Penrith Press was taken in the 1990's and clearly shows what the site looked like when the place was consistently slashed by Comland. You would not recognise the same area now because of the regrowth of Cumberland Plain vegetation. The story has one misquote - they should have said...retained in public ownership not private. Thanks **Geoff Brown [cwmalis@mpx.com.au](mailto:cwmalis@mpx.com.au) Convener ADI RAG 0431 222 602**

THE ADI site's regional park could be reduced in size by 50ha, ADI Residents Action Group convener Geoff Brown said.

Conversely, State Assistant Planning Minister Diane Beamer said the park was to be enlarged.

Mr Brown said 828ha of national estate registered land was due to be included in the regional park, but now the State Government wanted to exclude 35ha of that land from the park and give it to Lend Lease.

Another 15ha was earmarked for drainage, he said.

"ADI RAG has written to all Penrith councillors and approached Jackie Kelly to act immediately to get this mess sorted out," Mr Brown said.

The Government was showing "an appalling lack of commitment to Western Sydney and its environment", he said.

"What sort of Government would hand over protection of the National Estate to a property developer?"

Ms Beamer said 47ha of residual national estate land outside the park boundaries was now under consideration.

She said the land could not be easily managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), because it was outside

the boundaries of the park, but Lend Lease must manage that land to protect its listed conservation values, as per the St Marys Development Agreement.

Some national estate land would be used for drainage, but the conservation values would still be protected, she said.

"The NSW Department of Environment and Conservation is now assessing the 47ha of residual

land and is actually proposing to add a further 17ha to the regional park."

A NPWS spokeswoman said the drainage ponds would provide "important environmental safeguards".

Mr Brown said Penrith Council and Lindsay Federal Liberal MP Jackie Kelly should not allow Lend Lease to own any part of the national estate lands.

## New tussle over ADI park Writer Sue Osborne Penrith Press

A council spokesman said the council had also raised the matter with the Minister, but they recognised the "irregular boundary shape and location of the non-included lands does present some management difficulties and some smoothing of the boundaries may be required".

Lend Lease declined to comment.

"They should be retained in private ownership through direct transfer to the State's public reserve system," Mr Brown said.

"These lands were listed for their conservation values, not so Lend Lease could use them for drainage basins."

Ms Kelly said she was seeking clarification on the matter from Environment and Heritage Minister Ian Campbell.

## MARRAMARRA NATIONAL PARK FIELD TRIP

**G**rant, keen to find local frogging spots, had discovered Marramarra National Park through the [www.NPWS Wildlife Atlas](#). (Highly recommended for any NSW flora and fauna search.) Amphibians listed include the Giant Burrowing Frog *Heleioporus australiacus* and Red-crowned Toadlet *Pseudophryne australis*.

After several successful trips, fourteen-year old Grant and his father Des, were familiar with the good sites.

Saturday evening remained warm, still and humid, in spite of a low blanket of steel-grey clouds and distant thunderclaps that seemed to promise frog heaven. Geckos were out as we walked down Marramarra Ridge Track, a rocky fire trail. George identified every one of the four local species --- Thick-tailed *Underwoodisaurus milii*, Lesueur's Velvet *Oedura lesueurii*, Eastern Stone *Diplodactylus vittatus* and the Leaf-tailed or Broad-tailed Gecko *Phyllurus platurus*. They were all found within metres of each other; all admired and photographed.

Marramarra National Park, sandstone, full of temporary creek gutters and soaks, is ideal habitat for the Red-crowned Toadlet *Pseudophryne australis*. A request for silence, and Grant, who has as good an ear as he has an eye, walked ahead with great aplomb, doing an excellent imitation its call, which has been described as the sound of chewing on a rubber glove --- a slowly repeated "squelch" or "ark...ark." But there were no Toadlets to respond.

An Eastern Froglet *Crinia signifera* was sitting beside the track. We looked at the light throat, generally indicative of females. She was a light plain colour, one of many variations of colour and markings that occur in this very common species.

A Bingo moment! On a rock, exposed, silent, Grant found a fat little Red-crowned Toadlet. Because it (She?) was vigorous and reluctant to be turned on its back, we had to imagine the beautiful black and white belly marbling.

On the ground, the sticky beads on Sundews *Drosera spatulata* shone in the torchlight. Young Kenso was

intrigued with the insects trapped in them. An Owllet Nightjar called as we walked back up the track to the cars.

Next, a short drive to three dams at the top of the ridge. We had left behind the mugginess of the valley. There, between two bushes, with its occupant bang in the middle, was the magnificent shining wheel of an Orb-weaver spider *Eriophora biapicata*. Like a graceful spinner, showing its great tensile strength, it billowed and bounced in the welcome breeze.

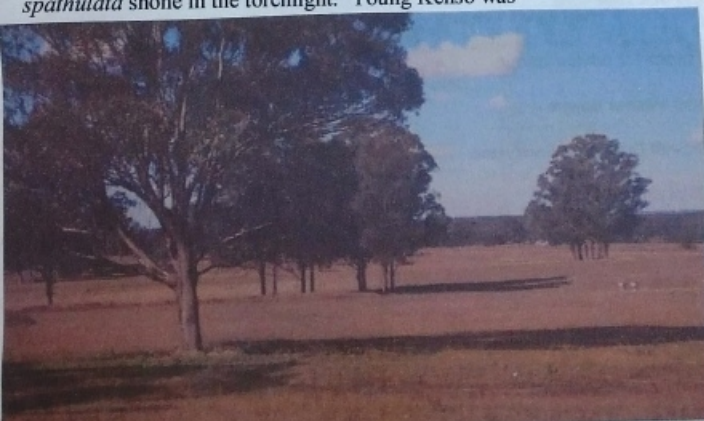
"The Rocket Frogs *Litoria latopalmata* sound like ducks", said Des as we arrived at the first dam. It is an apt description. Waves of quacking sounded across the water. Robert found one on the bank. As he tried to catch it, it streaked sideways. "It rocketed!" he laughed.

We found a Peron's Tree Frog *Litoria peronii*, brownish and unremarkable in shadow. In the torchlight its beauty, emerald dots and mango and black flash colours, revealed to the first-time froggers. George lifted up a very large yabby. Its waving claws stopped any close inspection. There were mating water scorpions in the muddy shallows. Then strange to see, running over the water, supported by surface tension, a small mole cricket *Gryllotalpa sp.* Do these little diggers lead secret night lives?

Grant found another Rocket Frog, this time *Litoria freycineti*, the Wallum Rocket Frog. He pointed out its diagnostic features --- more warty than *L. latopalmata* with skin folds in roughly longitudinal rows. That done, it jumped on Kenzo. Brad captured a *latopalmata*. What vigour! It quacked away with the general chorus while in his hand.

Later we heard the drawn-out 'squelch' of the Smooth Toadlet *Uperoleia laevigata*, but not one was caught. We didn't persist. It was Cinderella time for lovers of frogs and other wild nightlife; the end of a very good field trip --- a torchlight treasure.

Grant thanked Des for his dedication and help, and so said all of us. A Marramarra Field Trip, thanks to the Websters, must be on every year. **15 January 2005**  
**Lead by Grant Webster**  
**Write up by Punia Jeffery**



“What sort of Government would hand over protection of the National Estate to a property developer?”

- ADI RAG's Geoff Brown

**FIELD TRIPS**

**Autumn/Winter Recess. No Field Trips Scheduled.  
The Spring/Summer Programme recommences in September.**

We have come to the end of our Spring/Summer frogging season. We would like to once again thank our fabulous team of field trip leaders. Their expertise, time & generosity are much appreciated by all in the FATS group. We really are fortunate to have such a wealth of talent in our club & it is only by their contribution that it is possible to conduct a field trips programme. We should also mention the generosity of venue managers who make very considerable concessions to the FATS group – The University of NSW for their enduringly reliable scheduling of the Smiths Lake venue, The Sydney Olympic Park Authority for both access to its frog habitats & for its continuous offers of assistance in all manner of things, The Australian Museum for invaluable help in the field & for the use of the theatre, The Centennial Park & Moore Park Trust (also for their help with Frogmobile activities), Forests NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Barren Grounds Bird Observatory & adjoining neighbours, the very kind rangers of The Manly Dam Memorial Park Trust, The University of Canberra (Jervis Bay venue), The Australian Reptile Park, The Taronga Park Zoological Trust, The Riverstone Trotting Association, & the numerous officers & representatives of local council authorities. - Many thanks to these organisations who not only give their support for FATS fieldtrips but often go to great lengths to ensure that FATS members have the most enjoyable fieldtrip possible. It is very rewarding to think that FATS enjoy such community support. We are also pleased that, by the conduct of our members, we continue to earn the support of these organisations.

Another year passes with Monica at the editorial helm, & our Field Trips Co-ordinator once again wishes to thank Monica for accommodating all those last minute amendments & also for all those editorial flashes of brilliance. Robert assures us that the presentation in the newsletter is a far superior version than the one that leaves his office! He has also asked that we make special mention of Arthur & Karen. The backbone of our field trips programme is undoubtedly Smiths Lake. These weekends are only made possible by their effort alone – there is an immense amount of organisation & time consuming effort that goes into these weekends (even down to the constant supply of tea, coffee & cakes!). Despite their busy schedules they always manage to squeeze in a weekend or two for us. The scientific reputation of Arthur ensures we have world class tuition & certainly the finest that is available to any natural history group in Australia.

The committee wish to especially thank Robert Wall for his inspiring field trip co-ordination behind the scenes, offering us so many diverse field trips, his personal commitment to ensuring everyone has a positive experience, his attention to detail and the reliability of field trips offered.

Finally, thanks to all those members who come out with us on our froggy pursuits. You make us feel that we are not as odd as we think we are! It is your support that makes the field trips programme worthwhile. We look forward to enjoying your company out in the bush again next season!

Cheers,

**The FATS Committee**

**FROGWATCH HELPLINE 0419 249 728**

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**INSURANCE DISCLAIMER** FATS has public liability insurance for its various public functions. FATS members should be aware that this insurance does not cover FATS members (it covers the public & indemnifies FATS). We are currently checking with insurance firms to see whether a realistic group policy can be organised to cover FATS volunteers and people who attend field trips.

**FATS meetings commence at 7pm and end about 9pm, on the third Tuesday of every **EVEN** month at the Australian Museum (February, April, June, August, October and December).** We hold six informative, informal, topical and practical meetings each year at the Australian Museum, Sydney, William St entrance. Please check this Frogcall for further FATS meeting information. Visitors are welcome. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations and other field studies, 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. Material from Frogcall **MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED** without the prior consent of the Editor or President of FATS. Permission from FATS and/or author/s must be obtained prior to any commercial use of material. The author/s and source must be fully acknowledged. Always confirm date and location of the next meeting.

# Would you Go to Homebush?

Please read the following information and let us know if you would go to Homebush.

Long-time FATS members will be aware that we have always run our meetings on the first Friday of every second month. The meetings have been held at the Australian Museum. The February 2005 meeting was changed, and was held on the third Tuesday of the month, in response to changes requested by the Museum. A number of members have indicated that the Tuesday night is not as convenient as a Friday night for the meeting.

Recently, the Sydney Olympic Parks Authority (SOPA) contacted FATS to see if we were interested in using a venue at Homebush for our meetings. The site is a large hall located in the Newington Armory Area (see Map). At present the hall is not regularly used, and could be used for our meetings (if we so wish).

As with every change of routine, there are advantages and disadvantages to consider. The advantage of a move to Homebush would be that it is more central for many of our members, the meetings could return to the first Friday of the month, there is unlimited parking and there would be no charge for the meetings. All audio-visual equipment (slide projector, data projector, CD viewer etc) will be available for the meetings. The disadvantages of such a move include disrupting our normal routine at the Museum, making our members who live in the Eastern Suburbs or the CBD travel further for the meetings, the nearest train station is a kilometer from the hall (but transport from the station could be arranged) and the hall is currently only fitted with temporary furniture (which would be replaced with better furniture should we use the hall regularly).

Please consider how this move would affect you.

*Please circle your answer*

Would you travel to Homebush for a FATS meeting?      YES      NO

Would you prefer the meeting to stay at the Australian Museum, even if the meetings were held on Tuesday nights?      YES      NO

What would be the biggest difficulty(s) for you to get to Homebush for a FATS meeting?

Circle one or more options as you feel appropriate.

It is no longer close by and convenient      YES      NO

I would have to catch public transport      YES      NO

I like the Museum and don't want to go elsewhere      YES      NO

I normally go to FATS meetings after work      YES      NO

I can't get my family to Homebush easily      YES      NO

Other (please describe).....

YOUR NAME (print) .....

Return by post to FATS PO Box 296 Rockdale 2216 or bring to the FATS meeting.

