

FROG CALL



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June 2005

THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC

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Rosebery Bell Frog Project



21 JUNE 2005 MEETING

Lots of Adult GreenTree and White Lip rescued frogs looking for adoption

16 AUGUST 2005 MEETING

FATS will hold our AGM at the Australian Museum followed by a guest speakers, frog slides, door prizes and light refreshments

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

Tuesday 21th June 2005

Australian Museum, Sydney, William St entrance

MEETING FORMAT for 21th June 2005

- 6.30 – 7pm A large number of Lost frogs (Adult white Lips, Green Tree Frogs (*caeruleus*), *litoria peronii* and *Litoria gracilentia* are ready to collect from the Frog Rescue Service. Please bring your FATS membership card and Amphibian Licence.
- 7.15 pm Main Speaker:- Arthur White "The Wonderful World of Toads"
- 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.

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LAST MEETING TUESDAY 19th APRIL 05

Martin Harris introduced us to the Frogs Australia Network on line and demonstrated many of its functions. It is a legacy of the WWF Frogs! Program and funding from Rio Tinto will support the network over the next year. The concept was implemented after conferences were held between representatives from frog groups from around Australia and some of the people involved with studying and conserving frogs. To see for yourself go to frogsaustralia.net.au.

Thomas Brereton took us frogging to Dingo Creek near Taree where he encountered Red-eyed Tree Frogs, Stoney Creek Frogs, Peron's Tree Frog and Bleating Tree Frogs near a pool for cattle and a Tusked Frog in a ditch nearby. At Wallarobba near Dungog, Thomas noted the different distribution of frogs at one dam compared with those at another dam with eels and turtles. The species at Tarback Bay included the Dusky Toadlet, Dwarf Tree Frog and Peron's Tree Frog.

Arthur White outlined the discovery of the Green and Golden Bell Frogs in a Rosebery yard and the rescue and ongoing maintenance of this endangered population. See elsewhere in Frog Call and our web site www.fats.org.au for further information.

The frog and reptile delights of the March field trip to Smith's Lake were presented in tandem by Peter Spradbrow and David Nelson. The combination of rain leading up to the weekend and warm temperatures resulted in sightings and photos of diamond pythons, many goannas, a pink-tongued lizard, leaf tailed geckos, small-eyed snakes and a golden-crowned snake. Superb photography by both young naturalists brought the frogs and reptiles and fun into the theatre for those not fortunate enough to have been on the trip.

Grant Webster favourite slides were of

Mixophyes iteratus, *M. fasciolatus*, *Litoria jervisiensis*, *L. revelata*, *Pseudophryne coriacea*, *Uperoleia fusca* and *Lim. peronii* from the Watagans national park.

The ones from Darkes Forest were *Litoria citropa*, *L. peronii*, *L. lesueuri*, *L. verreauxii*, *Crinia signifera*, *Pseudophryne bibronii* and the photos from Port Stephens were of *Litoria fallax*, *L. jervisiensis*, *Paracrinia haswelli*, *Lim. peronii*, *Lim. dumerilii grayi* and *Pseudophryne bibronii*.

The one-eyed bell frog (*Litoria aurea*) was from Kogarah golf course.

Lucky winners in the door prizes were Elvira Lantham and Kevin Bessell. Socialising over supper brought the evening to a close. **Wendy Grimm** FATS secretary

FATS AGM NOTICE FOR 16 AUGUST 2005

The Frog and Tadpole Study group of NSW inc (FATS) will hold our Annual General Meeting at

the Australian Museum 7pm Tuesday 16 August 2005. We encourage you to consider standing for any of the committee positions. We welcome a fresh approach and new ideas. Anyone interested in nominating for any positions is greatly encouraged to do so, as the committee is always short at least a couple of positions. Nomination forms are available from our current president Arthur White, our secretary Wendy Grimm or by writing to our post office box (see front and last page for details) **MW**

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Mo. 20.6. – FATS on Radio 2UE (954 AM) with Jennifer Speckhouse, mostly about the Rosebery Bell Frog rescue project.

2.-4.8. – Science in the City at the Australian Museum, where FATS will run interactive workshops for high school classes. Also raises money for FATS. Helpers needed – contact Arthur on 9599 1161.

Sunday, 30.10. – Sunday 6.11. is Frogweek!

Radio 2RRR's weekly "Frog Wrangler Time" (featuring FATS and mostly Arthur) has moved from Friday afternoons to the Friday Morning Show, where Paul E.J. now hosts it from 6 – 8 a.m. on 88.5 FM. That segment is syndicated to other community radio stations Australia-wide and was at the last count taken up by 30 of them. Gippsland is transmitting repeats of it twice daily, 7 days a week! You should find a programme with FWT topics on www.cbaa.org.au. The FWT audio tracks may end up on a website as well (ours or someone else's); something we are looking into.

On Mondays, Frog Wrangler Time segments and "short segments" are now also on Radio 2SER 107.3 FM, in the Daily Audio Magazine. It runs from 9:30 to noon, hosted by the original Ruby Vincent who started putting FATS on her airways a year and a half ago. Her show includes Mike Archer, Bob Beale and Chris Harris (Sydney City Council green councillor) as other regular contributors. **Lothar Voigt**

FROGBITS & TADPIECES

The ABC Radio 702 studio gave FATS another good airing on 17.4. – thanks to good ole Simon Mamie.

Totally Wild filmed a story last year on the Terrey Hills frog pond that we had to disinfect from chytrid fungus. That story, sadly, was never screened and never will be. Their sound equipment didn't work properly, and they couldn't rescue any of their footage. They were especially disappointed that we were not so keen on doing it again – like disinfecting and pumping the whole pond out all over again. They did cheer up when I told them about the Rosebery project which they want to move in on instead. (A Current Affair are also interested in that story – we should find a way of auctioning it!)



Breeding insects. Following the S.O.S. call to keep our ever-hungry FATS frogs in tucker without breaking the bank, we have had one whole family starting on large-scale mealworm farming; getting the kids to research the project and setting things up for mass production. Another member will soon follow with ranching crickets. But we need more. Please contact Arthur (9599 1161, 0419 249 728) or me (9371 9129 or 0419 249 728) for details.

CWA is the Country Women's Association; and do they have frogs at heart! They have taken to our FrogFacts info sheets and they have a great demand for frog speakers. Thankfully, our sister organisation SOFAR is lending a hand and are speaking to them in the Hunter area where we city froggers can't reach.

Our staple fish for suburban frog ponds has been the White Cloud Mountain Minnow. Our native-fish friends from ANGFA have recently found White Clouds in quite large numbers at Piles Creek, Somersby; and I understand they have also turned up in the wild at the mid-north coast and in the lower Blue Mountains. I suggested to Fisheries they hold back declaring White Clouds as noxious (at least in urban areas) until FATS and other groups have had a chance to provide some input also. Our FF2 and FF3 info sheets do warn about non-local fish in ponds where they could get washed out – but there may be more to the problem, and a bit of research might be in order. (Does anyone still remember what the S in FATS Group stood for?) L.V.

SMITHS LAKE REPTILE REPORT

The sun had long set and my hopes of making the first evening's frogging activities were looking dismal as I pulled in to the road to the Smiths Lake field station. However turning round the bend I was relieved to see the bobbing lights of a dozen or so headlamps crowded around in a circle. Getting out of by beaten up old Ford 'Betsy' I was greeted by a crowd of smiling faces and promptly handed a young diamond python by David. It was a brightly coloured juvenile which didn't seem to mind being handled by inquisitive hands eager to have a play. We all took it as a good omen for the start of the nights activities and went on our way reluctant to say goodbye to such a beautiful animal.

Further down the road another snake, this time a Marsh snake *Hemiaspis signata*. Unfortunately however it had been run over. It did make handling a lot easier though and we were able to turn it over and have a look at its black belly which gives rise to its other name, the Black Bellied Swamp Snake.

The lagoon we visited proved bleak for frogs but we did come up with a couple of reptiles including a juvenile Water Dragon *Physignathus lesueurii* which received a surprise wake up call after being skilfully nabbed by one frogger. On the way out a Pink Tongue Skink *Cyclodomorphus gerrardii* was spotted sitting up on a tree watching the procession of froggers go by and wondering what he had done to be put literally in the spotlight. At Wallingat David also spotted a large and

beautifully brown coloured Leaf Tailed Gecko *Phyllurus platurus* sitting well camouflaged on a mossy tree stump.

The next day saw Peter and Alex herping out early and their efforts were rewarded by a Yellow Bellied Three Toed Skink *Saiphos equalis* as well as a sighting of a Heath Monitor *Varanus rosenbergi*. Their attempts at catching one of the resident Lace Monitors *Varanus varius* with Arthur's pond net however proved futile for the time being. However just after lunch a lacey was spotted crossing the lawn and with military precision the two lads and myself spread ourselves out into a pincer movement and moved in for the kill. The lacey soon figured out what was going on and went from a shambling gait into an all out sprint and then our manoeuvre turned into a free for all scramble for the goanna. Surprised birds took to the air and onlookers yelled out calls of encouragement. Squelching through the wet lawn after the goanna, it cut across me and headed straight up a tree where I just managed to grab him off and put him on the ground where he was promptly pinned down by many eager hands. Congratulations to Punia and Karen especially for facing their fear of goannas and holding them all on their own like seasoned veteran goanna catchers.

The second night's frogging had commenced and Betsy had a full consignment of eager froggers on board as well as a couple of infiltrating herpers too. Every time the lead vehicle stopped ahead our hearts would skip a beat hoping that something interesting had been spotted but each time we saw David wave his hand in resignation we all muttered 'another bloody stripey' under our breath. However when we saw Arthur get out we knew it was something serious so we all ran out and were rewarded by a Small Eyed Snake *Cryptophis nigrescens*. After managing to pick it up with great care and turning it on its belly a chorus of Aaahhs came from onlookers at the striking pinkish red colour of its belly.

We continued on our way with keen eyes peeled for possible Stephens banded snakes once we reached Wallingat State Forest but alas none were found. Another Small Eyed Snake was again spotted on the road and this one was a much larger individual. On picking it up it released a defensive odour which can only be described as a snake fart and believe me it stank. The snake took up a defensive pose rearing up its head and flicking its body which made photographing it quite difficult. We asked for Rob's hat to place over it to calm it down but he quite wisely declined citing the odour as reason enough.

The last surprise of the night was found at the quarry at Wallingat were Arthur calmly pointed out the presence of another elapid. A Golden Crowned Snake *Cacophis squamulosus* up on the rocks looking for a midnight snack of geckos. It jumped out from in front of him and landed in front of David and I where we gingerly tried to catch it before Arthur said 'Its ok guys it wont hurt you' where David promptly set upon it and picked it up. This too was quite a placid snake and didn't seem to mind being handled. All in all this Smiths lake trip proved to be quite good not only for frogs but also reptiles and the diversity of the local wildlife stands testament as to just how great a place it really is.

By George Madani



BELL FROG POND UPDATE #2



The last update's ink was still wet when the good news came in: Sydney City Council approved the Development Application in what must be record time, and they (but another section) also approved the funding. And we went and put the lovely design on our web site and congratulated ourselves and ran two working bees and threw the old pool in the skip and completely covered ourselves in mud, and we were punch-drunk happy.

Working bee number one (on 7.5.) is pretty much summed up in the SMH photo. The hard workers who didn't make it into the picture were Maria and Matt, Alistair, Elaine of course and – a sign of our multi-organisational task force – Bernard from ANGFA. Bee number two (on 15.5.) had an easier task, wheelbarrowing everything into a large 5 m³ skip and packing it down, right to the top. John and Elaine and their daughter Stef, and Maria and Matt, Laurene and Alistair did all that, with me mostly taking care not to get run over – that wheelbarrow picked up some speed!

So, everything should have been ready for the brickies, but as things happen, two things did happen. The Council said oops, their regulations state they were not allowed to approve it after all, it would have to be approved right at the top and could FATS redo the submission and with a detailed costing and a fixed figure. We also said oops, we want to change the design, we now want something that is less colossal and more liveable with for John and Elaine,



and at the same time just as good a breeding habitat for the frogs. That was the design charter, anyway. What emerged a few chewed-up pencils later had everything turned inside out but is much nicer: Where at first the whole slab area (8.8 m x 4.7 m) was child-proofed and only the main breeding pond was barred from interfering Striped Marsh Frogs, we now have the whole slab off-limits to Stripies and only the main breeding pond child-secured. Add a few bells and whistles and a little flourish, and that's the pond I would badly want at my place if my family would only let me. Anyway, that redesign is with the DA people at the Council now. You will see it on the FATS web site when the re-approvals are in.

If we get those two green lights very soon, we can squeeze in another working bee or two before I must abscond for a few months. Then, in spring, we do all the finishing touches and we bring in 2 m³ of specially steam-sterilised chytrid-free soil (courtesy of the Botanical Gardens!). And we release the little froggies that are growing bigger and fatter every day.

Arthur and I are raising what was in mid-January a few of good dipnet scoops of metamorphs. Mine (ah, I wish they were), mine on loan are in exactly two sizes – kept apart – with the in-between and the smaller ones all gone, the little cannibals. They are now far less vicious: Since the end of April not one got lost or mangled, whereas earlier on even nearly same-size ones kept getting stuck into each other. And the bigger ones are now very definitely more interested in mealworms than in flies. But they are a splendid lot: not one deformed one was found, not one single sick or weak one ever. (I did keep up my vitamin Ds, though, and the tanks – however crowded – are squeaky clean.) The small lot are 33 mm (+ 2 mm) long and are still keeping quiet (12.6.05). I am holding 60 of those, spread across 3 XL plastic cages. The big lot are 55 mm (+ 2 mm) and are calling louder every day. I have 74 of those in a 1.8 m tank, and I will shortly have an aviary ready for them. If they start breeding before we can release them all, we may have a little bit of a problem.

In the meantime, the media has greeted the discovery of this last known remaining breeding population in the Eastern Suburbs with much enthusiasm. Apart from the SMH and Southern Courier articles, the Daily Telegraph is researching the story, and Channel 10 (Totally Wild) wants to feature the working bee completion stage. Of course, 2RRR and 2SER ran with it and syndicated it far afield. Then a phone call on 10.5. at 6:15 a.m. by Angela Catterns' producer, wanted me to be awake enough to be on Your ABC an hour later. Expected insomnia questions but managed to mention our website twice. Minutes later a Gabrielle from National Radio News rang for a pre-recording – I tried to make sure she won't cut the website bit out.

Which will need to be updated again. L.V.



GRUNTING GREEN BATHING BELLS GET THE ROYAL TREATMENT

Hooray for the green and gold ... volunteers dismantle the disused swimming pool in a Rosebery backyard in which a colony of rare native bell frogs had taken up residence.

Ten years ago, what was thought to be one of the last colonies of endangered green and gold bell frogs held up the construction of a \$200million residential development at Rosebery.

Their numbers had fallen so low a special breeding program was established at Taronga Zoo with 10 adult frogs rescued from the site. But unbeknown to the developer, Meriton, and zoo staff, some of the frogs had taken up residence in a disused above-ground residential swimming pool about five blocks away.

Today, the Rosebery colony numbers in the hundreds and will soon have a new pond, thanks to the efforts of the Frog and Tadpole Study Group of NSW.

Sydney's green and gold bell frog has a history of turning up in unexpected places. The discovery of 100 frolicking in a flooded, abandoned brick pit at Homebush Bay before the Olympics derailed plans for an inland Sydney Harbour.

Their discovery earlier this year in Rosebery won't have quite the same impact but it is still significant, says the study group's publicity officer, Lothar Voigt.

"These frogs used to be everywhere in Sydney," he said. "They are at Homebush and Kurnell but this is the only known breeding site in the eastern suburbs."

With the owners' approval, volunteers began pulling down the backyard pool on Saturday, gently shaking out the froglets and putting them in temporary containers. By mid-year, the group hopes to have built a breeding pond in the Rosebery backyard that will double as a storage pond for rainwater.

The frogs' habitat once stretched from south of the Queensland border to East Gippsland in Victoria. They are still listed as endangered, but, says Mr Voigt, are breeding "like you wouldn't believe" at Rosebery.

They can grow to 85mm and have a distinctive call that starts with a slow, drawn-out growl followed by short grunts. Their colour ranges from dull olive and bright emerald green to brown or gold. Known as a coloniser, bell frogs move into areas not inhabited by other frog species, and move if rival species turn up. They don't mind if the water is murky, which is why they are often found in disused industrial sites such as brick pits.

Mr Voigt hopes other residents will create havens for the bell frog. But he warned that once they settled in, residents needed permission to remove them.

By Wendy Frew Environment Reporter SMH 10 May
Photo: Dallas Kilponen

DUNNY FROGS

I was listening to your talks on radio ABC whilst travelling from our farm coast last Sunday (17th April) and was interested in the number of people who have green frogs in the toilet.

We had this 'problem' for a long time and couldn't work out how they were getting in when we blocked off all possible - so we thought - entry points.

We also had another intriguing problem of thumping noises on the tin roof at night which sounded like footsteps.

I couldn't stand the suspense any longer one night and got out the ladder and climbed on the roof and discovered green frogs jumping over the roof.

From this event came the discovery of how the frogs were getting into the toilet. The PVC pipe that allows the odours from the toilet pipes to go up into the air above the roof are a haven for the frogs. They climb into the pipe - through the smallest of holes - and must live there during the day.

For whatever reason - a water source I guess - they then seem to find their way down the 'stink pipe' along the pipes and up into the toilet.

I now cover the stink pipe with a stocking and for a week or so after that, monitor the toilet and remove the frogs that come down the pipe. They hide under the rim as well and you need to flush the toilet and see if a little leg appears from under the rim as the water swirls under it and gently remove the frog - a no mean feat!!!

I cover the stink pipe not because I don't like the frogs in the toilet but I am concerned that they actually get flushed out into the septic when they are not seen before 'sitting'.

We provide many havens for our frogs but the ideas contained on the web site which I have just read are great and we will add more hidey holes for them.

Unfortunately we also have a large python population which I am sure finds the frog to be a tasty snack.

Living on the Far North Coast, we also have a major cane toad explosion and our frog habitats have to be well above ground to keep the toads out.

I hope this information might help other people with 'dunny' frogs Cheers Gail E.



ADI SITE – REQUEST FOR EMAILS & LETTERS

ADI RAG believe that a Regional Park classification is inappropriate for the ADI Site lands spared from development. The remnants of land to be set aside as RP are very significant and deserve a reserve classification befitting its conservation value. A Nature Reserve would be a fitting classification. Unfortunately we are stuck with a Regional Park zoning because of political intervention.

A typical Regional Park is an area devoid of decent bushland that is used for public recreation. Penrith Council is using the RP classification to push their barrow of opening the site up to unrestricted public use. Council is unhappy that the NPWS proposal for recreation is limited to walking, cycling and picnicking and BBQ areas where appropriate. Council wants a wide range of public recreation facilities and opposes restrictions on public access to the RP. Lend Lease put forward a similar proposal for unrestricted public access to the RP but PCC's goes beyond LL's plan.

ADI RAG have proposed that only walking be allowed, that visitor access is monitored, that an entry fee be charged and that there is only one exit and entrance which is locked every afternoon. Basically, restricted public access to a fully fenced RP. I am urging you to write letters to the Editor opposing the recreation model proposed by PCC. Send to Roslyn Smith Penrith Star
E-mail Address(es): r_smith@mail.fairfax.com.au or Ms Alison Taylor Penrith Press taylora@cng.newsltd.com.au

The following points are worth noting:

- * ADI Site is the most species diverse remnant of all Cumberland Plain vegetation
 - * Its high conservation values are recognised by its National Estate listing
 - * The reason it has conservation value is because it has been locked away from public use
 - * There is no shortage of nearby recreation land
 - * Penrith Lakes Scheme is a 2000 ha reclaimed hole in the ground with 700 ha of parkland proposed. Karyn Palluzano has invited all of Sydney to recreate there.
 - * Lend Leases first suburb, Ropes Crossing, boasts that it will provide space and more space, 16 parks, 25 km's of hike and bike trails, wetlands, sporting fields and playgrounds (why then trash adjacent bushland to provide what is being provided in the development)
 - * There are two more suburbs proposing the same thing
 - * Many of Councils parks, such as Werrington lakes, are under utilised, because of poor management by council, toilets that are always locked, few seats, no picnic and BBQ facilities. (yet they want to push recreation at the ADI Site)
 - * There is also 48 ha of Regional Open Space at the ADI site adjacent to the RP that is to be used for recreation (overkill then to go into the RP)
- Regards, Geoff Brown ADI RAG www.adisite.org

FROGS ESCAPE PERUVIAN COCKTAIL BLENDER

About 4,000 endangered frogs won't be whizzed into popular drinks after being found in an abattoir fridge and released by Peruvian authorities.

"We were checking the fridges when out jumped a frog. It had escaped, they were in big crates," a spokesman for Lima city hall said today.

Frog cocktails are popular in the Andes because of their supposed aphrodisiac qualities. Shops in central Lima selling the drinks have tanks where customers can choose their frogs.

He said the Telmatobius frogs - which had apparently been brought from the southern lakes in the high Andes -- were found in the abattoir yesterday.

They were taken to a colonial fountain in central Lima to splash around before being returned to their native lakes by ecological police.

"There were about 5,000 of them but 1,000 died because of the conditions and in transit," the spokesman said.

Reuters Lima, Peru April 29, 200

forwarded on to FATS by Alistair MacDougall

WHERE THE FROGMOBILE'S BEEN

We ran the Frogmobile ragged again. I turned up with it at Centennial Park on Sunday, 24.4., with our steadfast Frog Explainers Arthur and Karen, the Nelsons, Alistair, Bernard, Alexahnder and Grant. Other FATS members dropped in for a chat; and some 2000 - 2300 visitors came over to have a good look.

Same again, because it was so good, at the same place on Sunday, 5.6., with the Grimms, Punia, Elvira, Alistair and Grant and his friends Brett and Matt. This time we had about half as many visitors - it's winter after all - but the weather was glorious and a good time was had by all.

Warringah Council ran a World Environment Day Youth Expo for school classes on 1.6. and 2.6. in Dee Why. We were there of course, with the Frogmobile, and ran workshops for them. On the first day Arthur and Karen were with me, the next day was with Marion and Monica.

Then came the horrendous bit. We figured we might have just enough time to get from Dee Why to Homebush Bat before closing time, to show the Olympic Parks people the Frogmobile. Arthur knew a shortcut and set a frightening pace, me following with the Frogmobile fishtailing in the thick lorry traffic and with little pushy cars cutting from all sides into my safe braking distance. That's the day I became a nervous wreck, but I didn't wreck the FM and that's the main thing. And the SOPA people were still waiting for us and they said they really loved the FM. Just as well I didn't have to tow it into their compound upside down.

The Frogmobile will be in mothballs until some time in the second half of September - which suits me because I'm away until then. And the Helpline phone (0419 249 728) will be with Arthur. L.V.



More than 100 protesters gathered outside NSW Parliament last Tuesday to cry foul over the State Government's controversial plans to take control of "State-significant" sites .

Leading the charge were green group Total Environment Centre, Greens politician Sylvia Hale and City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore.

Voicing the objections of local

government was the NSW association president Genia McCaffery.

The planning reforms, currently being debated in parliament, will allow Planning Minister Craig Knowles to speed up critical projects by over-riding environmental and heritage requirements.

If the bill is passed, the government will take control of medium-density housing projects at the Rhodes Peninsula and Sydney

Olympic Park. The proposed laws will also cover any developments worth more than \$50 million.

While Mr Knowles has argued that the reforms would help cut through red tape to the benefit of business and the State economy, Ms Hale said it would be the community that would suffer, for what was "an obvious payback for years of developer donations to the Labor Party".

Emily OKeefe

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200504/s1352292.htm>

EXPLODING TOADS BAFLE EXPERTS

Hundreds of toads have met an unexplained, explosive demise in Germany in recent days, it was reported on Saturday.

According to reports from animal welfare workers and veterinarians as many as a thousand of the amphibians have perished after their bodies swelled to bursting point and their entrails were propelled for up to a metre.

It is like "a science fiction film", according to Werner Smolnik of a nature protection society in the northern city of Hamburg, where the phenomenon of the exploding toad has been observed.

"You see the animals crawling on the ground, swelling and then exploding," he said. He said the bodies of the toads expanded to three-and-a-half times their normal size. "I have never seen such a thing," said veterinarian Otto Horst. So bad has the death toll been that the lake in the Altona district of Hamburg has been dubbed "the pond of death".

Access to it has been sealed off and every night a biologist visits it between 2:00am and 3:00am, which appears to be peak time for batrachians to go bang.

Explanations include an unknown virus, a fungus that has infected the water, or crows, which in an echo of the Alfred Hitchcock movie *The Birds*, attack the toads, literally scaring them to death. -AFP

For those not on promed@promed.isid.harvard.edu a reply about the exploding toads. Cheers, Deborah Pergaloti Frog Hospital Cairns

It's an interesting situation, clearly a mass-mortality event, but little more than that can be said at present. ..SNIP.. It's plausible that the dead toads in Germany all died relatively simultaneously due to one of these or another infectious agent. SNIP One scenario is that large numbers of toads that died due to another reason would then begin to decompose such that gases produced by gut bacteria caused the "explosions," but of course, the cause of death remains uncertain. SNIP We await the results with interest. Peter Daszak Daszak@aol.com (extract)



NOT SEEN, NOT HEARD: Kathy Godfrey (from left), Jenna Hore, Nerida Williams and Scott Freeman are working to bring back more frogs to Bankstown. Photo: NICK BLOUKOS

THE croaking call of frogs may be returning soon to a suburb near you, if Bankstown City Council environmental officers get their way.

Work has begun at Cutting Reserve in Padstow and Mirambeena Regional Park at Lansdowne to bring frogs back.

The works, designed to improve water quality and flow and create an attractive habitat for the creatures, have included replacing exotic weeds with native plants, and stabilising creek and river banks.

Dedicated frog ponds have also been built.

The plan for the works began when Bankstown environmental officers in 2002 could find only five species of frog in local waters – down from 12.

Those missing included the endangered green frog, the golden bell frog, and the green tree frog.

Bankstown Council environmental projects officer Kathy Godfrey said the program also hoped to protect remaining frog species in Bankstown.

“We are providing a habitat that was lost during the development and urbanisation of Bankstown,” Ms Godfrey said.

“These frogs are a very important part of our local biodiversity.”

The greatest threats to frogs included habitat loss, pollution, and gambusia – fish that prey on frog eggs and tadpoles.

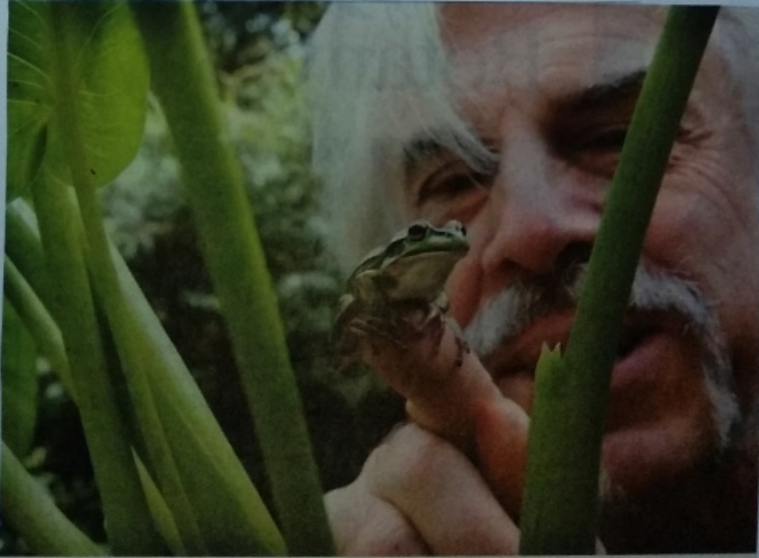
Ms Godfrey urged residents to help protect the frogs by joining a local bushcare group.

Details: 9707 9999.

Council dedicated to making creeks frog heaven

EXPRESS 3 May 2005 writer David Catt
Photo above sent in by Heinz Zimmermann

Photo below, see page 9 for media story



Lothar Voigt of the Frog and Tadpole Study Group with a green and golden bell frog. Photo: Callaghan Walsh

Educating for a sustainable future

Ben Roche, Coordinator, Sustainable Living Project, University of New South Wales

One view is that there are no environmental problems as such, but rather human problems that have arisen due to how we approach and interact with natural systems. Changing the actions of people is critical to affecting the scale of change necessary to create a sustainable future. Fostering responsible citizenship and engaging agents of social change is especially important for school aged children. It is this philosophy that was behind the genesis of the Sustainable Living Challenge.

The program seeks to encourage education for sustainability, rather than simply about sustainability, and imparts the skills necessary for young people today to have the capacity to create a sustainable future. The application of critical thinking and reflection in a collaborative environment drives it.

This education approach can be characterised as active, inclusive, collaborative, cross disciplinary, learner centred and enquiry based. Participants are encouraged to develop their capacities for action through articulating

their vision for a sustainable future, and then identifying the questions, issues and problems as a starting point to guide their own learning. Teachers are involved as the primary gateway for wider household and community participation. Indirectly, young people are considered to be the catalysts or drivers of change and they provide access across scales to adult decision makers in households and schools.

The program has three key objectives:

- * Encourage students to consider their capacity to create solutions to local environmental and sustainability issues as a part of their school experience
- * Assist teachers over time to extend their teaching through providing an engaging enquiry based program that compliments existing units of work
- * Recognise the existing efforts of secondary students, teachers and schools that are actively engaging the challenges presented by

Education for life; education through life; education throughout life.

Mahatma Gandhi

sustainable living in individual, group or whole school projects.

This year also marks the start of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The potency of this Decade is that it universally recognises the role that education can and must play in creating a sustainable future, and will act as a focal point for educators and practitioners the world over.

The nature of this contribution is evident through the 'Ahmedabad Declaration', an outcome of the first meeting in India of over 800 educators and practitioners to mark the start of the Decade. 'As we gather in the city where Mahatma Gandhi lived and worked, we remember his words: Education for life; education through life; education throughout life. These words underscore our commitment to the ideal of education that is participatory and lifelong.'

In support of the aims of the Decade, the Sustainable Living Challenge will act to link

teaching and learning in schools to a wider civic context. In this process sustainable living provides an ideal multi disciplinary context relevant to most key learning areas.

The program started in 1998 with a pilot of 10 schools in collaboration with the NSW Department of Education. It now engages around 13% of all secondary schools nationally. This year, through a new partnership with the United Nations Environment Program the program has relaunched as the Sustainable Living Challenge in recognition of its learning approach to the innovative challenge that sustainable living presents to us all. This partnership will link Australian participants with similar experiences and initiatives throughout the world.

Past entries in the program have ranged from an interactive computer game to educate about bush regeneration, a solar powered lawnmower, large group campaigns to restore river health and whole school approaches orienting curriculum towards education for sustainability.

They're small, green and sound like a motorbike changing gears – and their discovery has been known to cause a sensation.

The green and golden bell frog was once one of the most common frog species on Australia's south-east coast, but during the past two decades its population has declined to such an extent that it is now listed as endangered. Nevertheless, while its numbers have dropped dramatically, this adventurous frog is by no means down for the count.

The discovery of hundreds of green and golden bell frogs in an abandoned brickpit at Homebush Bay forced Olympic organisers to shift the site of the tennis venue for the 2000 Olympic Games.

And 10 years ago their discovery on the site of a multi-million-dollar residential development at Rosebery held up construction while the frogs were captured and placed in a breeding program at Taronga Zoo.

But it seems that some members of the Rosebery colony liked the neighbourhood too much to move. Just a few blocks away from the development site is a cottage with an old above-ground swimming pool that is now teeming with green and golden bell frogs.

"They are great travellers and they can roam around about two kilometres or so every night, but we didn't know there

was still a breeding site around," Lothar Voigt, of the Frog and Tadpole Study Group, said.

"The couple who own it [the property] let the frogs share their pool and let them come and go as they please.

"Every year the bell frogs spawn in the pool and every year droves of baby frogs leave the pool to seek their luck in the neighbourhood."

The pool, however, had become so dilapidated that frog enthusiasts spent a day last week capturing the frogs and tearing down the structure.

"The pool was hardly standing up anymore, so we're building a special frog pond," Mr Voigt said. "It will be a raised pond so that striped marsh frogs can't get in and spoil it for the bell frogs, and the pond also doubles as rainwater storage."

Interestingly, the green and golden bell frog can change its colour to match its environment.

It has a distinctive, four-part call, which some say sounds like a motorbike changing gears.

"Ja, people say that," Mr Voigt said, "but to me it sounds only like a green and gold bell frog."

For more froggy info check out www.fats.org.au/

SOUTHERN COURIER
Life on the edge 17 May 2005

These little green Rosebery residents are
Staying a jump ahead of extinction

Report Alisse Grafitti (picture page 8)



Planning a froggy future: Johnstone shire's economic development officer Kelly O'Kane and frogger treasury Nev Smith, with "Freddo" at Warrina Lakes. Picture: DUNCAN PATERSON

PLANS to build a \$2 million frog farm and a 13ha wetland system in the heart of Innisfail could make the Warrina Lakes complex the biggest ecotourism attraction in the Far North, naturalists say.

The frogger would house thousands of native and exotic frogs in a two-storeyed central geodesic dome linked to three smaller domes on the lake shores. The main dome would be 40m high, with interactive displays, running streams and waterfalls.

Smaller inter-connected domes would house breeding areas for rare and threatened frogs and insects, and

Duncan Paterson Innisfail reporter

research and treatment facilities.

The 20ha complex, near the town's northern entrance, already has a network of scenic lakes stocked with native fauna and flora, botanic gardens and a bush tucker garden run by traditional owners, the Mamu people.

Tropical Frogger Innisfail secretary Janet Elders said the addition of a frogger would make the area an "environmental wonderland".

Displays would include a natural history museum, dioramas of rainforest Aboriginal life, bush tucker and medicine, and three-tiered rainforest

habitat displays of ground-dwelling, wildlife, under-storey and canopy species. "We have the blessing of the Mamu who would provide tourist interpretive staff, incorporating their Dreamtime legends and frog stories in tribal lore," she said.

Ms Elders said concept designs and business plans for the frogger were complete, a feasibility study showed it could be profitable, and the next step was to prepare a strategic plan to attract funding.

"The wetlands committee is planning to remove the state's biggest infestation of cherimoya (pond apple) and replace it with running ponds — they need to dig holes, and we need landfill to keep our site above flood levels," she said. "Hopefully we can bring both projects home together."

"The Federal Government is looking very favourably at the scheme, and has offered to meet half the development cost under its Regional Solutions Program."

Ms Elders said the committee was discussing research partnerships with James Cook University in Cairns, Earth Watch in the US, and the Innisfail campus of TAFE, which could provide certificate courses for laboratory technicians.

■ A meeting to discuss the plan will be held at the Johnstone Shire Hall training room on Monday at 5.30pm.



Rosebery frog pond

Strathfield Council prepares its own study for Enfield terminal. Report EMILY O'KEEFE

As the mid-year due date for Sydney Ports' Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for an intermodal freight terminal at Enfield draws closer, Strathfield Council is preparing to counteract its contents with data of its own.

General manager David Backhouse has confirmed the council will be engaging its own independent consultants to conduct several studies on what impact the proposed 24-hour terminal could have on environmental and heritage issues.

"We will be looking at every aspect including noise, flora and fauna and traffic implications so that we can compare it to Sydney Ports' EIS," Mr Backhouse said.

One of the many environmental concerns explored by the council will be the welfare of the endangered green and golden bell frog.

"There is a corridor that the frog uses and that includes the Enfield marshalling yards. That is still existing and still needs to be looked at," Mr Backhouse said.

A spokesperson for Sydney Ports said that its EIS would also be including a study on the frog, which would examine how any habitat created could allow connection to other local frog sites.

But local environmentalist and spokesperson for the No Port Enfield group Gary Blashke said winter was the worst time to conduct studies of the frog and both reports would be hampered by their timing.

"They are what you would call a basking frog and they go out and sunbake. They bury themselves underground in winter, which makes them hard to find."

"Studies have been done which have identified as many as 400 frogs in Enfield, which would make it one of the largest colonies in NSW."

Sydney Ports is expected to make an official development application for the intermodal freight terminal mid-year, at the same time as it releases its EIS. The proposed terminal would have the capability to accommodate 300,000 six-metre freight containers.



Habitat concern: The green and golden bell frog.

MAJOR CHANGES TO ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT

Last week the State Government introduced into Parliament a new Bill which proposes major and alarming changes to the assessment process for large-scale developments in NSW. The legislation removes many of the hard-won environmental and planning laws that have existed since 1979, when the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act) was first introduced.

Essentially, the Bill gives the Minister largely unfettered discretionary powers regarding:

- the environmental assessment of large-scale projects
- the criteria for approval,
- the need to consider the views of the public and procedures governing such projects,
- the need for separate approvals including approvals on pollution, native vegetation, cultural heritage, coastal protection, bushfire safety, rivers and fisheries.
- the approval of critical infrastructure development even where local plans prohibit such development.

For further information, visit:

www.nccnsw.org.au/parliament/projects/Parliament/part3a.html

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Field Trips

Autumn/Winter Recess. No Field Trips Scheduled.

The Spring/Summer Programme recommences in September.



By Stephen Crowley Xmung-one@bigpond.com
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The FATS Committee is very aware that some members feel a great reluctance to venture into the bush at night. Many have quite unfounded fears of night-time in the wild. Quite contrary to popular belief, the bush on a summer's evening possesses a unique charm & wonder. We can assure you that our organised trips are safe, comfortable & lots of fun! If you have never looked for frogs in the wild (or have difficulty finding those tricky species) then come along to a FATS fieldtrip! Our fieldtrips are the perfect introduction to the night-time bush. Most sites are quite close to car access so personal fitness is not really crucial for attendance. We are also fortunate to have members with extensive experience in very wide-ranging fields of natural history, & seldom are our nights limited to just frogs. Our spotlighting often yields a wide variety of fascinating nocturnal fauna. You will learn the secrets of successful nocturnal wildlife watching & you'll have the chance to encounter some of Australia's shyest & most endearing residents! We always provide ample opportunity for our photography enthusiasts. Many of the images that appear in the newsletter & other commercial publications have been taken on FATS fieldtrips!

We are a natural history society & frogs in wild places are a key focus of our activities. We encourage all members to experience the bush & learn firsthand a little of a frog's habitat & ecology. It is an important part of gaining an appreciation of our froglife & establishing a connection with our native environment. Where possible, we will always try to give preferential bookings to newcomers. If you have any enquiries regarding any aspect of fieldtrips, or any suggestions (or feedback of any kind) please feel free to contact me..

Cheers, Robert Wall, Field Trips Co-ordinator, on behalf of the FATS Committee.

The FATS Committee

FROGWATCH HELPLINE

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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.