

FROG CALL



NEWSLETTER No. 85
October 2006

THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC

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Giant Burrowing Frog *Heleioporus australiacus* (page 3) Photo Karen Willems



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

Friday 6th October 2006

Follow signs to Building 22, Jamieson Street,
off Holker Street, Sydney Olympic Park



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Special Offer

FREE Frogs of Sydney poster is hot off the press. FATS designed it specially for easy recognition of frogs within the greater Sydney region. We will give out a free poster to every member/(family) who attends the next meeting.

Please bring your FATS membership card for "stamping".

MEETING FORMAT for 6th October 2006

- 6.30 pm White lip, gracilentas, fallax and perons lost frogs need homes and are ready to collect from the Rescue Service. Please bring your FATS membership card & Amphibian Licence.
- 7.00 pm Welcome and announcements: Arthur White
- 7.30 pm Main Speakers: George Madani, speaking about herpetofauna of the Kimberley & Monica Wangmann *Pseudophryne corroboree*, Corroboree frog field trip to Kosciuszko.
- 8.15pm 5 Favourite Slides. Tell us about your recent frogging trips or experiences. If you have slides or other images, bring them along as well. Door prize and guessing competition, followed by light refreshments and pleasant conversation.

FATS MEETING 4 AUGUST 2006

We are here! We have moved to Homebush, with the help of Judy, Jenny, Kerry from the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA). The good ship FATS is sailing along nicely thanks to the president, committee and members who support our frog society.

Members at the last meeting attended the AGM, where our president, Arthur White and treasurer Karen White gave their reports and took questions.

We thank the outgoing committee members for their commitment to amphibians and their habitat protection. All the previous committee were re-elected and we welcome on board “fresh blood” ... Grant Webster who has joined the editorial team.

Now that the editorial team has two younger members, discussions have begun about a new look Frogcall. Gone may be the dinosaur days where Monica's cut a paste was with scissors and glue!

The editorial committee would like to hear from our members. **Would you be interested in getting an electronic colour version of Frogcall emailed to you instead of a hard copy?** Would you be prepared to forego your “mailed out” black and white copy of Frogcall? Of course Herpetofauna would still be delivered to you twice a year. We may offer members a choice of either our colour electronic Frogcall newsletter (six times a year), which might be even larger than the current 12 x A4 pages or to continue receiving the hard copy black and white 12 page version by mail every two months. The committee would appreciate your feedback to either Monica **wangmann@ihug.com.au** or to **The FATS editorial committee PO Box 296 Rockdale NSW 2216**. If we did proceed with an electronic version, we would probably have a period of time where members received both copies, to ensure that the electronic transmission was happening successfully. Any decisions to change the current Frogcall distribution methods will be discussed at committee after feedback from our membership and publicised in future Frogcalls.

Dave Hunter from the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) was our main speaker at the last meeting.

Recovery efforts for the declining frogs of Kosciuszko National Park are of interest to the DEC, who have funded Dave to be close to “where the action is”. The recovery program covers both river breeders such as the Spotted Tree Frog and Booroolong Frog and pond breeders such as the Corroboree Frog and Alpine Tree Frog.

The internationally known Southern Corroboree Frog, whose call differs from its Northern cousin, is of special interest. Efforts are being made to stop it blipping out. *Pseudophryne corroboree* breed in southern alpine bog pools, grasses and sphagnum moss. Males attend the nest with accumulated eggs. Frog numbers have crashed from over 500 in 1986 to

50, with remaining populations having less than 5 calling males.

Sharing most sites is *Crinia signifera*, the Common Eastern Froglet but 86% of them are a “reservoir” for chytrid. To counteract the effects of “typhoid Mary” of the frog world, a draft national threat abatement plan for amphibians is being tested. It is hoped that the species may evolve a natural resistance to chytrid, over time.

Reintroduction experiments are currently being undertaken. Captive rearing of eggs and release of tadpoles and metamorphs are occurring.

Gerry Marantelli is the backbone of these projects, which have cost around \$100,000. Gerry has borne much of this financial burden. Other Australian scientists including Rod Pietsch, Will Osborne, Michael McFadden and Scott Keogh are acknowledged for their work. (Ed:- Apologies for poor spelling and anyone I have omitted.)

We thank Dave for travelling so far to speak to us, the excellent slides and for his insights into the challenges facing the amphibians of KNP.

Grant Webster presented a report for the Darkes Forest field trip and other observations, including excellent slides accompanied by sound recordings of the frog calls. Frogs photographed included *Pseudophryne bibronii*, *Litoria Booroolong*, *Lt. Littlejohni*, *Lt. freycineti*, *Lt. fallax*, *Lt. citropa*, *phyllochroa*, *Lt. lesueuri*, *Uperoleia* and *Paracrinia haswelli* and many more.

David Nelson spoke about the characteristics and declines of the Red-crowned Toadlet *Pseudophryne australis* and sightings of the Common Eastern Froglet *Crinia signifera*.

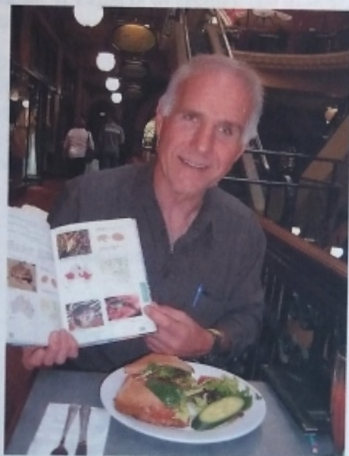
The evening ended with, the distribution of door prizes, adoption of lost frogs, light refreshments and conversation.
MW



Female Mountain Grasshopper *Acripeza reticulata* photo Gerry Marantelli, Kosciuszko National Park, March 2006

HARALD EHMANN WHITLEY COMMENDATION

Since 1979, each year the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales has been hosting the Whitley Awards. The awards are presented for outstanding publications that contain a significant amount of information relating to the fauna of the Australasian region. You will remember that a few years ago our committee member Marion Anstis was awarded the Whitley Medal, the most sought after prize in zoological publishing in this country.



This year Harald Ehmann, the FATS Group's founder (and instigator of most of our major projects) received a Commendation for his groundbreaking wildlife management manual. On the recommendations of the Whitley Review Committee a small number of publications were selected for presentation at a Certificate of Commendation at the Whitley Awards ceremony in the Australian Museum.

Harald's "South Australian Rangelands and Aboriginal Lands Wildlife Management Manual" is in large part also applicable to wildlife (including frog) conservation elsewhere in outback Australia. It contains many important and fascinating ecological observations and conclusions, and it gave me great pleasure – and new insights on every page – when I had the chance to browse through it. L.V.

NCC ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006

This year's Annual Conference is on October 21 & 22 at the Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

Your membership needs to be financial to participate in the Annual Conference. Please feel free to contact us if you need more information about the 2006 Annual Conference or membership of the NCC.

Regards Bruce Diekman Office Co-ordinator
Nature Conservation Council of NSW
bdiekman@nccnsw.org.au

Kosciuszko National park

FREE FROGS OF SYDNEY POSTER

FATS will give out a free Frogs of Sydney poster to every member/(family) who attends the next meeting. Please bring your FATS membership card for "stamping".

The Frogs of Sydney poster is hot off the press and has been designed by FATS especially for the easy recognition of Frogs within the greater Sydney region. It's a valuable quick reference resource and is free if you have renewed your membership or joined FATS this year.

Pick up your free (420mm x 594mm) poster at the next FATS meeting on 6 October 2006 and happy frog spotting. Alistair MacDougall

FRONT PAGE, GIANT BURROWING FROG

This beautiful frog is a Giant Burrowing Frog found along the banks of the Hawkesbury River by Pam Jones who was doing some bush regeneration. She thought it was a cane toad and called up FATS for an ID. Karen Willems came to the rescue and has called her Gina, the Giant Burrowing Frog! MW



BATTLE FOR BAW BAW FROG:

LOG IT AND SEE

Large sections of untouched forests on the Baw Baw plateau may be logged to determine if clearfelling will threaten the critically endangered Baw Baw frog.

A leaked PaperlinX memo says VicForests has recommended the logging of the 10 Baw Baw frog environmental coupes on the plateau's southern escarpment. It expects to receive the go-ahead from the State Government within weeks.

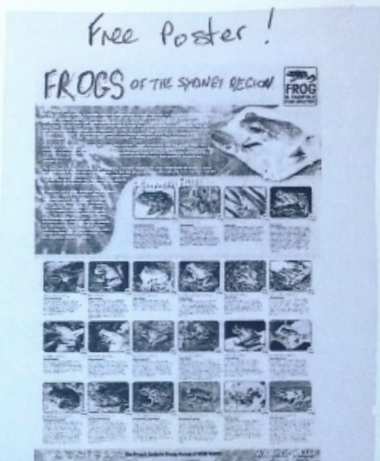
Logging of the coupes was suspended in December 2004 after federal intervention and a spokesman for Environment Minister John Thwaites denied there were plans to resume harvesting. It is believed the suspension will be reviewed next week.

The frog, found only in Victoria, has all but disappeared, with the population falling to a few hundred from up to 15,000 in 1984. The proposal to log the 200 hectares is part of the habitat experimental harvesting program to determine if clearing would harm the frog, which is on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature red list, and is protected under state and national laws.

Environmental groups want the Federal Government to use the same powers it did to protect the orange-bellied parrot.

"To log a forest to demonstrate if it is detrimental to Baw Baw frogs is like throwing a baby into a swimming pool to demonstrate it can't swim," said Professor Jean-Marc Hero, of the IUCN. Peter Weekes 27 August 2006
<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/battle-for-baw-baw-frog-log-it-and-see/2006/08/26/1156012790189.html>

Frogs of the Sydney Region



Lost frog photo from Europe sent to Martyn Robinson at the Australian Museum



WHERE THE FROGMOBILE WENT

It was the last weekend of August. It was the Ku-Ring-Gai Wildflower Festival. And it was great! Quite apart from the frog-friendly garden-minded public at the festival; they are always interested in what we've got for them. Two of them even lent a hand unfolding the Frogmobile and setting up the frog table. As it turned out, they were John Buckley and Mark Abell, keen native fishes people from ANGFA, and always keen to diversify into frogs as well.



Mark Abell populating his data base- photo Lothar Voigt

Mark has uploaded his photos for you to look at. Go to <http://pracsol.homelinux.com>, click on 'home', then click on the 'Festival of Wildflowers' image. You will get 32 photos, 13 of which are of the Frogmobile. Gorgeous big thumbnails that you can blow up in a choice of two resolutions.

Mark, by the way, is also the author and keeper of what has quickly become one of the biggest and busiest biological survey websites around. Go from his home page to the 'ANGFA Aquatic Survey Database', or straight <http://db.angfa.org.au/>. Apart from plants, fish and other animals, you will find plenty of frogs there. Survey information and photos can be contributed by people who have registered to log in, but most of it can be seen by everyone. Enjoy the treat.

Back at the Wildflower Festival, the initial clouds had gone and the crowds were coming. Our wranglers on Saturday were Marion, Annie, Brad and Matt and their parents, and Alistair and family – baby and I said “goo” to each other; we're best friends now. On Sunday Merinda and her friends Kate and Christine opened the Frogmobile up with me; then came Grant and Wendy, and the visitors had plenty of froggy people to talk to.

One “visitor” turned out to be David Olliffe, Ku-Ring-Gai Council's Bushland Education Officer. He got interested in our planned project to get Bell Frogs to spawn in half wine barrels that are out of reach of Striped Marsh Frogs (more on that next time). They

don't have any Bell Frogs over there but plenty of other tree frogs, and so he quickly organised for his council to distribute lots of barrels to their residents, together with bits and pieces for frog shelter and for a little wetland. Good work, David! L.V.

FROGBITS & TADPIECES

No more fly pupae at meetings; at least for now. Too little demand.

Simon Marnie will be on about frogs and FATS again: Sunday, 15 October, after the 10 am news on ABC 702. Can't stop him!

Ken Eastwood from Australian Geographic is a regular on 2UE and tends to mention frogs and FATS in the same breath. Listen out for him.

Totally Wild made a segment of the Enviro Expo at Narrabeen, featuring the Frogmobile and that soggy sorry thing we dug in the pounding pouring rain, trying to make a frog pond before it filled up with water. They showed it all on Channel 10 on 23 August.

Cinemas are currently showing “An Inconvenient Truth”, the Al-Gore-slideshow-turned-movie on global warming, by who-was-the-next-president-turned-earth's-conscience. Of course it mentions frogs. The frogs of course have Bush to worry about.

Parramatta Council are facelifting a stretch of Duck River in Granville, to make it specifically friendly for tree frogs.

Excavators were concerned about a frog they found at Wiseman's Ferry, showed it to FATS (Karen Willems), then took it back and carefully dug it in again. It was a rare Giant Burrowing Frog. If we can reach out to people sitting on bulldozers, I think we're winning!

And that 'no such thing frog' that was dropped off at a vet in Allambie was indeed a frog. Moreover, it was a Southern Bell Frog, *Litoria raniformis*, another rarity. Found, where else, in Bunnings. L.V.



Marion Anstis and her Whitley award winning Tadpoles of South-eastern Australia book – photo Lothar Voigt

FAQ – How Can I Help?

The questions below often occur in student assignments and may also be of general interest for anyone who has heard of the plight of frogs and wishes to help.

Frogs face many new and human-induced threats to their existence, including: the Amphibian Chytrid Fungus, feral fish, land use by humans, water use by humans, habitat fragmentation, water pollution, pesticides in the food chain, climate change, plus other suspected and still unknown threats.

While some of these problems need to be addressed at the regulatory, educational and motivational levels, others can be tackled in our own backyards and by small groups of like-minded people. The old motto 'think globally, act locally' certainly applies in this area.

L.V.

What you can do:		
<p>Make a frog pond</p>	<p>Why? What's a death trap pond? What's a toxic sink? How would you modify a wading pool? How about a pond for tree frogs only? Where can you get more frog pond info?</p>	<p>It gives frogs a habitat, improves your garden, and is educational and motivational, especially for kids.</p> <p>A pond with steep sides where non-climbing ground frogs can't get out.</p> <p>A pond at the bottom of a slope where snail pellets, dog poo, grass clippings etc. get washed into. Make a low earth wall around it to deflect runoff water.</p> <p>Cover it and its sides with a black shade-cloth, stand potted swamp plants on top, potted garden plants and some soil around the outside, fill up and wait for the frogs. Provide movable shade in summer.</p> <p>Either a raised pond or an in-ground pond with a 60 cm high wall or fine-meshed fence around it. The very common Striped Marsh Frog then can't get in, which reserves the breeding habitat for tree frogs.</p> <p>Read "Keeping Frogs in Your Garden", http://www.fats.org.au/publications/pdfs/FF206.pdf.</p>
<p>Adopt a wetland</p>	<p>Give an example of what could happen to it. Whom would you tell if something happens to it? How can you help save a frog habitat?</p>	<p>You may know of a threatened species in the wetland, and the bulldozers are coming. Or the frogs are no longer calling, in conditions when they normally should, and a following search has not found any. Or you found several deformed or dead or dying frogs.</p> <p>In case of doubt, ring the Frogwatch Helpline first, on 0419 249 728.</p> <p>You could join a FATS Group working bee to restore an important habitat of a threatened species. Or you could help with frog surveys on FATS field trips.</p>
<p>Learn what's calling</p>	<p>Why would you take a sound recording? How can you put a name (and a face) to the call?</p>	<p>Each frog species sounds different. You can identify the ones you hear by taking a sound recording and later checking it against a frog identification tape or CD. Now having the name, look up a picture of the frog in a field guide, and if possible compare it to a photo you took. (Often you only hear the frog but don't see it; sometimes you only see it.) This will help you determine how many – and which – species there are at the site.</p>

	Why could that be important?	The number of frog species gives some indication whether the habitat is still intact or degraded. If it also contains threatened species, it is even more important to protect it.
Report a Cane Toad	Whom would you call? Why were they released in Australia? Why did it backfire?	The FATS Group's Cane Toad Alert number 0419 249 728. Together with the DEC/NPWS, we come across some 40 Cane Toads in the Sydney area every year. We are trying to prevent them from breeding here. They were released in Queensland in 1935 to pacify cane growers whose crops were being eaten by a plague of beetles. The toads did not stay in the cane fields; they are expanding through much of Australia; they eat out the food supply of other animals. Worst of all, they (and their eggs and tadpoles) are very poisonous to nearly all native frog-eating wildlife.
Look after your environment	What's a good way of saving water? What's a good way of reducing water pollution? What are drought refugia?	Top your frog pond up with rainwater from a storage tank. Use leaf litter as garden mulch and as hiding and feeding habitat for ground frogs. For water-loving garden plants, use a semi-enclosed greenhouse with access for frogs. Easy on the chemicals. Use frogs instead of pesticides. If your grey water contains detergents, discharge it into the garden below ground level. Places that stay wet even in a severe drought. In country areas, these are sites from which frogs can repopulate lost ground. If they go, frogs go. Link them with wildlife corridors and drainage channels.
Don't become a spreader!	Why is it a bad idea to move a frog from one area to another?	The main reason is to reduce the risk of frog diseases spreading further. The Amphibian Chytrid Fungus has devastated frog populations through parts of Australia. Moisture (e.g. wet equipment) can also transmit it. Anyone involved with frogs or their habitats should know about chytrid and understand the frog hygiene protocol (http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/PDFs/hyprfrog.pdf).
Get your friends to join a frog group and ring the Frogwatch Helpline if you need support.	How can you do that? How does that help?	Take them to see the Frogmobile. Take them to a FATS meeting. Sign them up and take them on a field trip. Or help with a FATS project or working bee and bring them along. Give them a membership for Christmas or for a birthday. Help them with a garden pond and show them how to raise tadpoles. Frogs are environmental motivators. Learning more about them and mixing with other frog friends will strengthen the ability and the resolve of the community to look after our frog habitats better than we have done in the past. Tell your (or your kid's) teacher that in NSW they are allowed to collect 20 tadpoles from the wild, provided they go back to the same place. The class will become very motivated to clean up the site before the froglets are released. Show your school how to make a frog pond that works.



VALE STEVE IRWIN

As shock and sadness over the news of Steve Irwin's death swept around the globe, one enduring sentiment prevailed - he died doing what he loved best.

An unlikely, almost accidental hero, Steve came to Queensland with his family as a young boy. The Irwin family settled in Beerwah on the Sunshine Coast and started a small reptile park. In 1973, Australia Zoo opened its doors to the public and it became a true family business.

The young Irwin grew up knowing the thrill of night-time adventures with his dad, catching crocs in the rivers of north Queensland. After a brief early career as a mechanic, Steve decided the zoo and living and working with animals was his real life's vocation. His prowess as a filmmaker began with backyard trials using his father's video camera.

From these most modest beginnings Steve Irwin became an international superstar. Affectionately and respectfully dubbed the crocodile hunter, a title he earned from his unconventional wildlife television

documentary series *The Crocodile Hunter*, Steve worked tirelessly alongside wife Terri to bring to people the wonderment, excitement and extraordinariness of the wild. He demystified the dangerous and gave people a reason to love and not fear, to appreciate and protect rather than destroy the most feared and dangerous creatures on our planet.

As a conservationist, wildlife expert and television personality, he won respect and wide acclaim with countless awards - more than 20 for his contribution to tourism alone. But he never lost sight of his purpose or his passion and despite the accolades, Steve Irwin remained quite simply the Aussie bloke from Beerwah - proud of his heritage, his country and his culture. As an industry, tourism has lost a champion - a giant, who through his great humanity taught us all to love and care much more about our world and those we share it with.

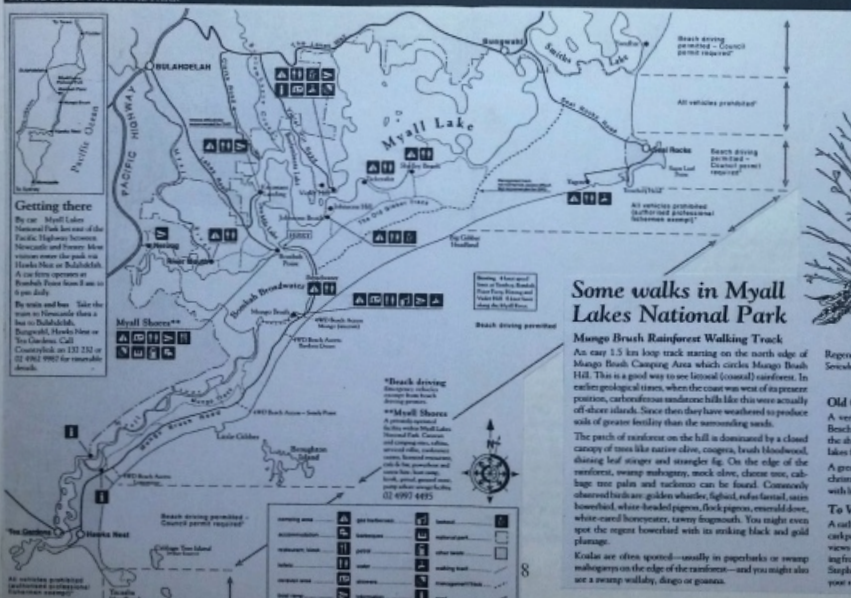
Even with such great fame, Steve was incredibly generous with his time and talent in promoting tourism to Australia and particularly Queensland. Whether he was talking to Jay Leno, performing for Australia Week or giving a quick video "shout out" to visiting travel agents, Steve never failed to tell the Australian story and he always found a way to share his love of his home - Queensland.

Our deepest sympathies go to the Irwin family, particularly Terri, Bindi and young Bob, you are his greatest legacy, and to the extended Australia Zoo family - the staff at Australia Zoo and The Best Picture Show Company.

Thank you for everything Steve - you will always be remembered.

Extracts from Queensland tourism website
http://www.tq.com.au/tqcorp_06/index.cfm?7B11B2F8-D1E9-21D5-6ECE-9C626DDC70DA

MYALL LAKES NATIONAL PARK



Regent bowerbird
Sericornis chrysophthalma

Old Gibber Track
 A very pleasant walk along a fire road leading to Shelley Beach, Tuckeroo, Johnsons Beach and Johnsons Hill along the shores of Myall Lake. There are impressive views of the lakes from Johnsons Hill.
 A great time to visit is late spring or early summer when the Christmas bells are in flower. This route is also very popular with hikers walking through the national park to Seal Rocks.

To Violet Hill
 A rather steep walk of about 800 metres from the Violet Hill carpark to a peak 124 metres above sea level. Spectacular views of the entire Myall Lakes system and coastline extending from Seal Rocks in the north to Yaculias Headland or Port Stephens in the south. The lake offers a refreshing swim on your return.

Struggle for survival

The Inner West is the front-line in the war against a deadly fungus that could destroy the surviving remnants of the green and golden bell frog population within a decade. The fungus might already have wiped out 207 species of frogs worldwide and has pushed the endangered green and gold bell frog to the edge of extinction. See pages 20-21



Inner West Courier

Tuesday September 26, 2006



Comment Editor Raylene Bliss on the world's disappearing frog species.

Hop into action to save planet

As a young girl growing up in a family dominated by boys there was not too much time for dolls as all of our adventures took place outdoors.

Exploring nature was one of our favourite pastimes and my grandmother's cupboard provided a constant supply of jars for us to collect all manner of creatures - that were eventually set free by our parents. Two favourites, probably because there was a ready supply, were bees (the occasional live sting was a small price to pay) and tadpoles. We even gave our tadpole adventures a name - "tadpoleing".

Frogs were also an ever-present part of growing up. I still remember the uneasy sensation of the frog's slippery, cold, wrinkly skin in my little hands and thinking these critters are better observed from a distance, but even though I didn't like touching them, I loved having frogs as a part of my world. These little unassuming creatures

have a charm all their own. How many amphibians can lay claim to being part of fairytale folk lore? Legend has it that a frog is a prince trapped in an amphibian's body. Generations will get to experience the charm of growing up with frogs.

Many species of frogs have already disappeared from around the world and more than 200 existing species of frogs are approaching dangerously low numbers.

These popular amphibians are sensitive environmental barometers and are looked to as an "early warning" system for the overall health and well-being of planet Earth.

The rapid decline in the number of frogs is a wake-up call for all humans and we must join the march to stop the kind of environmental vandalism that is killing our frogs and our planet.

But there is hope. Dr Michael Maloney, an environmental scientist with Newcastle University, said all conservation efforts should look to the scale and size of Sydney Olympic Park's project.

"There's a number of hypotheses, but whatever they're doing is working they've been able to maintain their populations," Dr Maloney said.

According to Dr Lee Skerratt, the Inner West is the front line in the war against the deadly fungus.

"Not all frogs are affected. Forty three species are known to be infected but pockets in contaminated areas have naturally managed to hold out," Dr Skerratt said.

The fungus has a temperature threshold of about 23 degrees, Dr Skerratt said. Normally, populations below that ceiling were wiped out, but frogs, including ones at Homebush and the Juno brick pit, have pulled through relatively unscathed.

The bell frog has also survived in some obscure places, including disused tips, landfills, quarries and even old sulphuric acid plants, while populations in "natural" environments are all but gone.

The hypothesis is that Homebush's heavy pollution and high salinity kills the fungus, allowing the frogs to breed and live on, Dr Skerratt said.

"We might be able to breed resistance. If you can identify and manage frogs living in areas unfavourable to the disease, we might be able to take their resistant offspring and repopulate traditional areas," he said.

If correct, the theory would be one of the great ironies of environmental con-



Enfield's freight terminal will reserve new habitat for the green and golden bell frog.

servation turning Homebush's terrible history of pollution into the fulcrum for saving its most famous citizen, the green and golden bell frog.

But proposals for Sydney Ports Corporation's (SPC) 24-hour freight terminal at Enfield, which is a known marginal habitat, have raised fears critical habitat could be destroyed, potentially inviting an ecological disaster.

The Department of Conservation is currently investigating whether maintenance work in August near Congrove Road flattened habitat.

Local environmentalist Gary Blasdel has described the terminal as akin to "environmental genocide", and said a terminal would break the natural link between known frog sites at the Juno brick pit and Cans Creek Reserve, threatening the area's viability.

Dr Skerratt said it was imperative that all bell frog habitat be held onto.

According to SPC's environmental impact statement (EIS), no frogs were

found on the site but they did seem to move across it. SPC's plan to put aside land for a new frog pond at the southern end of the site has not appeased the fears, with many objectors saying the pond is little more than cynical optics.

But Dr Arthur White, who compiled the terminal's EIS, said the new ponds would provide an essential corridor east towards an endangered population at Rosebery and the Cooks River.

"We want to get to a stage where the frogs are self-sufficient and don't need to be managed," Dr White said.

"We are trying to get a network that encourages the frogs from Homebush to filter through. What we really want is to get a continuous strip of small ponds and vegetation in people's backyards. This gives the frogs cover and access to water. The more people involved, the better the strip."

Should we be doing more to protect frogs? Vote on page 42.

innerwestcourier.com.au

NEWS

Fungus stalks endangered frog



The endangered green and golden bell frog. Photo: Craig Wilson

Scientists fear the green and golden bell frog could be lost within a decade, writes Dave Berick.

Green and golden bell frogs used to be easy enough to find, swimming and jumping around waterways up and down the east coast of Australia.

But the famous frog is now on the precipice of extinction, confined to a handful of coastal pockets and estuaries. Bell frogs on the Sturt tablelands have been decimated; only one alpine population remains.

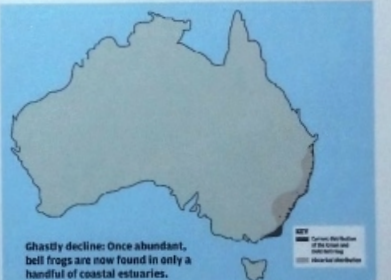
The culprit is *Chytridiomycosis*, a deadly fungal spore that attacks the keratin protein in the frogs' skin.

Scientists are still not sure how the fungus kills the frog. It may release toxins through the skin, or - given that frogs drink and breathe through their skins - it may block or stop the frogs' respiration.

Yet one fact is irrefutably clear: the fungus is a killer. World wide, it's thought the fungus might have wiped out 207 species. In Australia, possibly nine, and definitely one, the sharp mounted day frog, are gone.

The disease spreads through frog to frog contact and "infected" waterways and it strikes when the frogs' tadpoles morph into frogs.

Dr Lee Skerratt, a lecturer from



Ghastly decline: Once abundant, bell frogs are now found in only a handful of coastal estuaries.

the Amphibious Diseases Unit at James Cook University in Cairns, said the chytrid fungus was one of the most amazing diseases in evolutionary history.

"We've seen entire population of frogs, which we thought were in isolated, pristine rainforests, just wiped out," Dr Skerratt said.

In impact on the green and golden bell frog has been catastrophic; more than 90 per cent of traditional populations have been lost, and only 58 recorded sites remain, many with only minute numbers.

Frog specialist Dr Arthur White said that if the current decline went unchecked, the species could be ex-

tinct within a decade.

"At the moment there are no self-sufficient, wild populations. Since 1996, another 10 known frog sites have gone," Dr White said.

Attempts to revitalise the frogs' numbers have been difficult. An experimental reintroduction program at Taronga Zoo, where healthy tadpoles were released into an estuary at Long Reef, was stopped last year because it was unable to produce a permanent population.

Taronga Zoo's Reptile Centre manager Peter Harlow said even though the program released 20,000 hatchlings, only a handful of frogs managed to fleetingly survive.

FATS CONTACTS

		phone	email
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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.

WWF Wildlife News Spring 2002



Lyndal Bat

TADPOLES BOOK WINS TOP SCIENCE AWARD

Marion Anstis (pictured left), a music teacher with a passion for documenting the biology of Australia's tadpoles, recently was awarded the nation's most prestigious natural history publishing award – the 2002 Whitley Medal for Services to Australasian Zoology.

Marion was presented with the solid silver medal by Professor Rick Shine, of the University of Sydney, during an awards ceremony held at the Australian Museum by the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales.

She received the highly coveted award for her landmark publication, *Tadpoles of South-eastern Australia*, which was published by New Holland and sponsored by WWF Australia's Frogs! Program.

"This is such an amazing achievement. Marion is a first-time author and other contenders for the award were some of Australia's leading scientists," said Stan

Orchard, National Coordinator of the WWF/Rio Tinto Frogs! Program.

"The Whitley Medal is a particularly coveted prize because it is not awarded annually, but is reserved only for the most exceptional achievements, whenever they may arise."

Mr Orchard said the majority of books on identification of Australian frogs were of little help in identifying the egg and tadpole stages of the various species.

"Marion's work is truly monumental and the drawings of the eighty-four frog species covered by the book have been meticulously executed. WWF Australia is proud to have been part of this immensely significant contribution to Australian natural history."

Marion's next project will tackle the endangered frog fauna of Queensland and the Northern Territory. WWF Australia, in partnership with Rio Tinto, is sponsoring this important research.



Faced with the awful truth of, say, global warming, most of us are tempted to throw up our hands and say: "What can I do?" The answer to that is: "Plenty." The well-worn mantra "Act local, think global" is as applicable today as ever and that's what this first edition of *Eco* is all about.

For instance, while the simple act of growing a few veggies, as Steve Payne suggests on page 6, or walking instead of driving as James Woodford writes on page 8, will have only a small effect on pesticide use or global warming, they are still real contributions.

And, more than that, small, thoughtful acts raise awareness that everything we do has an effect on the planet.

Eco has been timed to coincide with World Environment Week. It is packed with information and tips on how you can do your bit, as well as looking at the bigger picture.

We hope you find it both inspiring and informative.

Nick Galvin, Editor
ngalvin@smh.com.au



The former 181-hectare Air Services Australia Site at Cranebrook was sold by the Federal Government in October 2004 to a property developer called IFC Capital Ltd. The Federal Government were condemned at the time because of the secretive nature of the sale and because of a lack of community consultation. The sale was dubbed the ADI Site Mark 2 because of the similarities with the ADI Site development debacle. There also appeared to be inadequate environmental surveying of the site by the Federal Government leading up to the sale. IFC Capital Ltd (then called Infracorp) paid only \$15 million plus GST for the entire site.

IFC Capital Ltd commenced discussions with Penrith City Council in 2005 as they need to get the land rezoned by Council to allow housing development. Council appears to have been working closely with the developer assisting them with their rezoning application. IFC have since completed a range of site assessments, required by Council, and they have lodged a rezoning application with Council so that they can develop 85 hectares of the site for what they are calling 'Environmental Housing'.

The site has immense conservation value and should not be developed in any way. The site should be returned to public ownership. The land should be acquired by the NSW Government using the \$315 million Growth Centres Conservation Fund and put into the management of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service so that conservation and passive recreation outcomes can be achieved for the community. The NSW Government has a fact sheet on its Metro Strategy website that states that a purpose of the Growth Centres Conservation Fund is to acquire high conservation land outside of the Growth Centres but within Western Sydney. This proves

that there are funds to buy back this land. It just needs the political will to do so.

The Cranebrook Site is an important link in a conservation corridor linking bushland south of the ADI Site through to the Blue Mountains. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service oppose the rezoning of the site because of its immense Natural and Aboriginal Heritage values and because it is part of this important corridor. Penrith Councils draft LEP Flora and Fauna Conservation 1999 shows that the entire Cranebrook site is classified as a conservation corridor. So why are they now contemplating allowing housing on the site?

Penrith Council must stop pandering to IFC Capital Ltd and reject their rezoning application. Penrith Council must work with local residents to lobby the NSW Government to buy back the site and ensure it is properly managed and protected. Penrith Council must do the right thing and put local residents and the environment first.

The Cranebrook site is very significant bushland but like most unmanaged bushland in Western Sydney it suffers at the hands of people who use the site to ride motorbikes, drive 4WD's, illegally dump rubbish, light fires, collect firewood and participate in other anti social activities. It is in desperate need of fencing and proper management. It is complete nonsense for anyone to argue that bulldozing the site is the best way to stop this anti social behaviour.

What the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation says about the Cranebrook Site:

"Based on the assessments that have been undertaken to date it is clear that the site has significant biodiversity and Aboriginal heritage values. The DEC considers that those values must clearly drive any future decisions regarding the site.

Having regard to those values, the DEC is of the firm view that the site has virtually no development potential. Given the identified conservation values and its size, shape, and current and likely future surrounding land uses, the protection of the entire site is therefore considered essential to maintaining its ecological integrity and the protection of Aboriginal heritage.

The DEC therefore considers that strong preference should be given to ensuring that the LEP delivers protection for the site as a whole. Options to achieve this outcome will obviously need to be the subject of further discussion. However, the DEC is not convinced that simply because the land has passed into private ownership that this in itself provides clear justification for making the site available for development".

**<http://www.savecranebrook.com/index.htm>
Petition Penrith Council P.O. Box 60, Penrith
NSW 2751 Fax 4732 7958 email
pencit@penrithcity.nsw.gov.au**

FIELD TRIPS

Please book your place on field-trips; due to strong demand, numbers are limited (phone 9681-5308).

Be sure to leave a contact number. Regardless of prevailing weather conditions, we will continue to schedule & advertise all monthly field-trips as planned. It is YOUR responsibility to re-confirm, in the final days, whether the field-trip is proceeding or has been cancelled. Phone Robert on ph. 9681-5308.

30 September to 1 October Smiths Lake Camp-Out. Leaders : Arthur & Karen White.

An ecotone is a transitional zone between two types of communities e.g. a rainforest & a woodland or a woodland & a grassland. Ecotones typically are very rich in faunal species since species unique to each community tend to 'overlap' at these fringes or margins. This weekend we will look at some of the different types of ecotones that occur around the Smiths Lake site. With our focus on frogs, we will look at the rich legacy of wildlife to be found in these important zones. Arthur & Karen have studied this site in detail for many years & have gained an intimate understanding of the reptile & amphibian biology of this area. Cabin/dormitory accommodation & camping sites available. All kitchen facilities/utensils/crockery supplied. A **non-refundable** nightly fee of \$12 p.p. per night applies. Bookings only accepted with payment. Phone Arthur & Karen directly on ph. 9599-1161 for bookings & further details. Note: Limit of thirty people.

21 October 1-00p.m. Darkes Forest. Leader : Marion Anstis.

Take the Princess Hwy south, then take the Darkes Forest Rd turn-off. Meet 200 metres from the corner. The award-winning & ground-breaking book, 'Tadpoles of S.E. Australia' needs no introduction to frog lovers. We are fortunate today to have the very gifted talents of Marion Anstis. Identifying tadpoles can be a very useful method of determining frog populations & can be carried out in the more comfortable daylight hours. Today, we go in search of taddies & Marion will guide us through the sometimes difficult task of identifying tadpoles. This is a unique opportunity to gain important & useful fieldwork skills. For everyone from beginner to professional field biologist ! Please note the afternoon start time.

4 November 8-30p.m. Scheyville National Park. Leader : Grant Webster.

Meet at the corner of Scheyville Rd. & Dormitory Hill Rd, Scheyville. Tonight we will revisit the woodlands of the Cumberland Plain & look at the frogs of the shale country. These frogs have learned to endure quite different conditions to their cousins of the coastal sandstone. We will discuss these differences & also look at some of the threats that have compelled authorities to list the Cumberland Plain Woodlands as an endangered ecological community. Because of the restricted occurrence of these woodlands, many of these frogs are hard to come by, so tonight should result in some highly sought-after species. Grant is already earning an enviable reputation for his research work, his fieldwork expertise is regularly sought by universities.

Sunday 3 December Australian Reptile Park, Somersby. Christmas Party.

Once again, our friends at the Australian Reptile Park have invited FATS members to join in with other herpetological groups for the annual Christmas bash. Bring your own food & drink. BBQ facilities are available. Gates open at 9.00a.m, but you may arrive at anytime. No bookings are required, but you must produce your FATS membership card to gain free entry.

9 December 8-30p.m. Heathcote. Leader : George Madani.

Meet at Heathcote railway station, Wilson Rd, Heathcote. Poised at the edge of an ever-expanding Sydney suburbia, Heathcote remains curiously rich in froglife. This is no doubt due to the rich mixture of micro-habitats it possesses. Tonight, we will look at these various habitats. We will also examine some of the problems & pressures that an intruding city can exert upon wildlife habitat. George is most at home amongst the vastness & remoteness of the Kimberley region. His lengthy work here has seen him gain a familiarity with some of the least-known & least-understood frogs & reptiles in Australia. Tonight, in between his outback commitments, he will spotlight his favourite Sydney locality.

***** DON'T FORGET** our specialist research field trips with Graham Pyke & The Australian Museum.

Ideal for all students & serious enthusiasts. Locations at Long Reef, North Avoca & Broughton Island.

Contact the Field Trips Co-ordinator for further details.

In the event of uncertain frogging conditions (e.g. prolonged / severe drought, hazardous and/or torrential rain, bushfires etc.), please phone 9681-5308. Remember ! - rain is generally ideal for frogging ! Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring enclosed shoes that can get wet (gumboots are preferable), torch, warm clothing and raincoat. Please be judicious with the use of insect repellent - frogs are very sensitive to chemicals ! Please observe all directions that the leader may give. Children are welcome, however please remember that young children especially can become very excited and boisterous at their first frogging experience – parents are asked to help ensure that the leader is able to conduct the trip to everyone's satisfaction. All field trips are strictly for members only - newcomers are however, welcome to take out membership before the commencement of the field-trip. All participants accept that there is some inherent risk associated with outdoor fieldtrips & by attending agree to; a release of all claims, a waiver of liability, & an assumption of risk.