

FROG CALL

NEWSLETTER No. 94
April 2008

THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP OF NSW INC
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Red-eye Tree Frog Photo by Ian Hewter



*Frogmobile helpers are like gold dust.
The future depends on you. We need "Frog Explainers"
No experience required. Call Lothar Voigt on 9371 9129
Email lothar@exemail.com.au
or ring the Frogwatch Helpline on 0419 249 728.*

Join us at our next meeting
Come at 6.30pm for a 7.00 pm start
Friday 4th April 2008

Follow signs to Building 22
end of Jamieson St. off Holker Street,
Homebush Bay, (Sydney Olympic Park)

Public transport available by bus or train.
Call us the day before if you would like
to be collected from the train station.



CONTENTS

2008 Easter Show	p2
Jane Davenport spectacular art	p2&10
Your events calendar	p3
Media clippings	p3
Puffy the frog	p4
Frog on a hog	p4
Frog launch in Sydney	p5
FATS AGM notice for August	p5
How Frog Father got launched	p6 - 8
Frog population	
resists killer fungus	p8
Ancient Devil Frog	
may have eaten dinosaurs	p9
Frogs spawn a backyard war	p10
Field trips	p10
Media clippings	p11
Committee contacts	p12
Field trip protocols	p12

MEETING FORMAT for 4th April 2008

- 6.30 pm Lost frogs needing homes. Please bring your FATS membership card, donation & amphibian licence to home a froggy friend.
- 7.00 pm Welcome and announcements.
- 7.30 pm The main speakers are
Mark Semeniuk (formerly of Sydney University, now with AMBS). "Froggie did a wooing go -
Cane Toads and their breeding habits".
Arthur White will present part 1 of "the distribution of Barred River frog genus *Mixophyes* in the greater Sydney region.
Field trip reports and five favourite slides.
- 9.30 pm Tell us about your recent frogging trips or experiences. If you have slides or other images, bring them along as well. Evenings end with our regular guessing competition, light refreshments and pleasant conversation.

FROGS AT THE EASTER SHOW

Spectacular frog art by FATS member Jane Davenport



Froggy bedsheets, anyone?

Photos by Lothar Voigt



Jane and her own T-shirt



Punia Jeffery's Frogs-of-Sydney talk L.V.

YOUR EVENTS CALENDAR

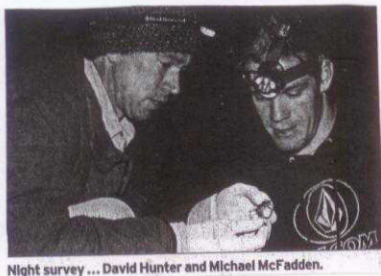
What happened

Sat. 26.1. We had an amazing rollout last Saturday at Parramatta Park for Australia Day – about 3600 people came to visit the Frogmobile between 9am and 5:30pm!!! Probably a record! For us (Sue Smith, Sarah Hewer, Joan Young, me and a complete stranger called Stacy) it was an exhausting day but well worth it.

Su. 27.1. The next day at Centennial Park was much quieter; Together with the Whites and my family, not to forget the two burly joggers who gave a hand, we had it all under control. The visitors, the weather and the frogs were gorgeous.



Wildlife Masters student Mark Semeniuk with a brown antechinus at the Faculty's Marulan NSW property, Arthursleigh, during the April WILD Field Studies Unit. Mark is a biologist researching frogs.



Night survey ... David Hunter and Michael McFadden.

One tiny hop from extinction SMH 15/3/08 p10 NSW was down to one male spotted tree frog. Now they are back writes James Woodford Spotted survivor...Frog 1088 was conceived and reared in captivity and released into Bogong Creek as a one-year-old Photos Rick Stevens (cont P11)



The dreaded chytrid fungus may have made some amphibians extinct, and now it's hit the UK.

Natterjack toads in Cumbria have tested positive for the chytrid fungus, a disease that's already devastated amphibian populations around the world.

According to Dave Coward of the Herpetological Conservation Trust, natterjacks are one of the UK's rarest amphibians and an outbreak would be disastrous.

Natural England considered eradicating infected populations in order to stop the disease from spreading, but that plan has been dropped. "This would have made sense if the infection was only at one site, but we now know that several sites are infected," said amphibian specialist Jim Foster.

At one site in Cumbria, 78 per cent of toads tested positive. Possible sources of the infection, according to Andrew Cunningham of the Zoological Society of London, who carried out the tests, include releases of exotic pets, movements of

What's happening

Easter Show talks by FATS members in the Horticultural Pavilion, just like last year. Punia and I kicked it off on 20. March; on 24. and 27.3. it's Grant and Chloe's turn; on 26.3. it's Monica's and Bill's; on 28.3. Martyn and Lynn are the speakers. On each of those days there's a talk about frogs of the Sydney area and one on helping frogs survive

What will happen

Su. 30.3. 10 am – Simon Marnie on ABC 702 live from the Easter Show. I'm bringing the frogs, Michael the croc and with Martyn it's anybody's guess

Su. 6.4. Randwick Council Eco-Living Fair, with Frogmobile and all. Helpers needed.

Sat. 12.4. Marrickville Council frog pond workshop. and **Su. 27.4.**

Fr. 2.5. – Su. 4.5. Frogmobile at Castle Hill Showground: It's the big giant huge Frog and Reptile Expo again. Those who went last year are still talking about it. Expo boss Anthony Stimson will mention a few of the coming highlights at the next meeting. Yes, Frogmobile helpers needed.

Tue. 20.5. Leichhardt Council for schools workshops, with Frogmobile. Helpers needed.

Wed. 21.5. and Th. 22.5. Warringah Council for schools workshops, with Frogmobile. Helpers needed.

Sat. 24.5. Frogmobile at Darling Harbour. Helpers needed.

Su. 25.5. Frogmobile at Waverley Council (Bondi Beach). To be confirmed. Helpers needed.

Su. 13.7. Frogmobile at Centennial Park. Helpers needed.

And we haven't even started yet! After all, this is the Global Year of the Frog. **L.V. lothar@virginbroadband.com.au** – note new email address; **9371 9129; Frogwatch Helpline 0419 249 728**

BACKGROUND

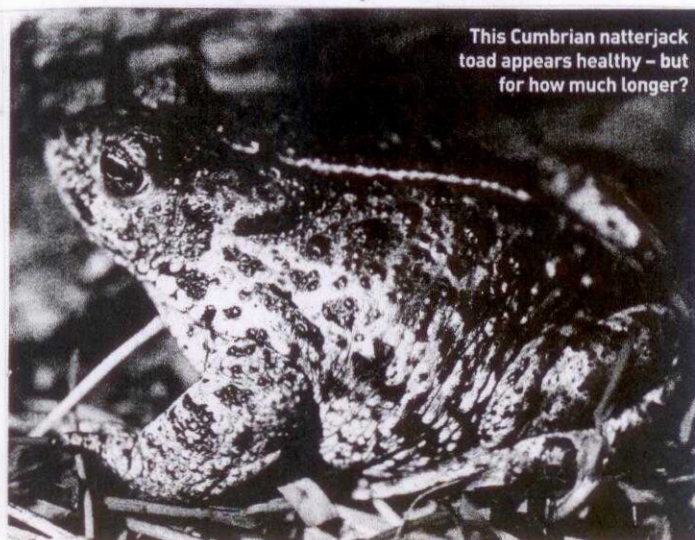
infected amphibians across the country or escapes of African clawed toads.

In 2004, American bullfrogs, which have become established in Kent, were found to be infected while they were being removed, though this did not result in an outbreak. "We need a national sampling programme to find out what's going on," said Coward.

Peter Minting

- » The chytrid fungus is thought to originate in Africa.
- » It has been blamed for declines and extinctions of amphibians all over the world, including the Costa Rican golden toad.
- » In Europe, infection rates are high among salamanders and Mallorcan midwife toads.
- » The fungus attacks the skin and impedes respiration. A sick animal may have peeling or discoloured skin and be sluggish.

Tropical fungal disease hits UK's rarest toad BBC Wildlife October 2007 Forwarded to FATS by Karen Thumm



This Cumbrian natterjack toad appears healthy – but for how much longer?



Puffy the frog ... fighting for his life after being beaten by a gang of youths.

PUFFY THE FROG FIGHTS FOR LIFE AFTER SEVERE BEATING

Puffy, the green tree frog almost kicked to death in a case of mistaken identity on the Gold Coast, appears to be on the mend. Senior veterinarian at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Dr Michael Pyne, said the badly injured amphibian had defied the odds and survived the night, but would need at least a week in recovery.

Puffy was brought to the sanctuary from Nerang on Thursday after being violently kicked by a group of children who thought he was a cane toad. He suffered a ruptured lung and severe internal bruising and was not expected to live. Too small to undergo an x-ray or ultrasound, Dr Pyne said a tiny camera had to be inserted into Puffy to make sure his organs remained intact. He is currently being soaked in a bath of pain-killing drugs after swelling to twice his normal size.

"It is still very much a touch-and-go situation," Dr Pyne told [brisbanetimes.com.au](http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au) this afternoon. "Everything is really badly bruised and bashed around, so it is just a case of monitoring him and letting the natural healing process begin." Dr Pyne said treating frogs was a "delicate balancing act".

"Their metabolism is so different (to other animals) so it can be a bit difficult. "None of his injuries are suitable for surgery...(but) we don't see these things everyday. "I'd say it will be quite a while before he is well enough to be released." While they are not an endangered species, green tree frogs are iconic Australian wildlife, and are synonymous with the conservation movement.

Dr Pyne said people often confused frogs with the maligned cane toad, as it could be difficult for the untrained eye to spot the difference. Nevertheless, he said kicking or bashing any animal to death was not the way to deal with them. "Clearly one less cane toad is better but I'm sure a lot of well-meaning people are killing cane toads that are actually other frog species," Dr Pyne said. "We would recommend that if you come across a cane toad to catch it and put it in the freezer instead."

Christine Kellett 9 February 2008

Forwarded to FrogCall by Arthur White

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/queensland/puffy-the-frog-fights-for-life-after-severe-beating/2008/02/08/1202234147108.html>

MEET THE FROG ON A HOG

No change into a prince yet ... Tong sai Bumroongtai, 52, kisses her frog Nong Oui. A pet frog that can ride toy motorcycles can also predict winning lottery numbers, her 52-year-old Thai owner says.

Tong sai Boommrungtai, 52, said she came across the frog, which she named Nong Oui, outside her house in Roi-Et, a province in the north-east of Thailand, AHN reported. "The frog had a small chick in its mouth," Ms Boommrungtai told AHN. "I looked her straight in the eye and knew I could communicate with her.

"I told her to drop the chick and she did and then came hopping in. Nong Oui has been helping villagers select lottery numbers, she said. "For a long time villagers would come round and get tips on the National Lottery with the frog's help," Ms Boommrungtai said. "Ten people subsequently won the lottery which drew crowds to the house - and then they started losing. "There is nothing more that she likes than to chill out on her toy Harley-Davidson, or a battery operated dumper truck."

If you're wondering what sounds - other than brmmmm brmmmm when they're on bikes - frogs make in different languages, allaboutfrogs.org lists the following:

Afrikaans: kwaak-kwaak	Arabic (Algeria): gar gar
Catalan: crucru	Chinese (Mandarin): guo guo
Dutch: kwak kwak	English (USA): ribbit
English (GB): croak	Finnish: kvak kvak
French: coa-coa	German: quaak, quaak
Hebrew: kwa kwa	Hungarian: bre-ke-ke
Italian: cra cra	Japanese: kerokero
Korean: gae-gool-gae-gool	Russian: kva-kva
Spanish (Spain): crucru	Spanish (Argentina): berp
Spanish (Peru): croac, croac	Swedish: kvack
Thai: ob ob (with high tone)	Turkish: vrak vrak
Ukrainian: kwa-kwa	

<http://www.smh.com.au:80/news/unusual-tales/meet-the-frog-on-a-hog/2008/02/11/1202578672657.html>

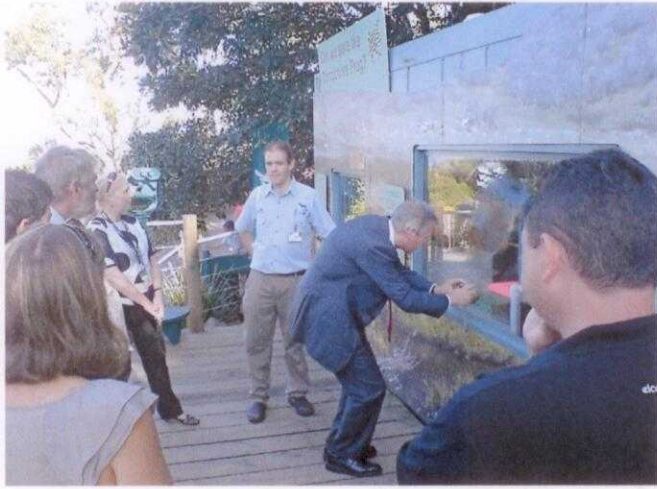
by Edmund Tadros 11 Feb. 2008 from Steve Weir



FROG LAUNCH IN SYDNEY

The Global Year of the Frog is now a reality! In Sydney, Taronga Zoo got it underway on 10 March, where they showed what they are doing to save two species that may no longer be viable in the wild.

Worldwide, zoos have pledged to perpetuate some of the many endangered frog species, in the hope that one day their descendants can be safely released. Apart from its long-standing Green and Golden Bell Frog breeding program, Taronga is now concentrating on breeding the Southern Corroboree Frog, of which only 50 adults are believed to be left in the wild, and on the Booroolong Frog, a Tablelands species that has suffered a recent catastrophic decline.



Taronga's a sealed and chilled shipping container holding a breeding population of irreplaceable Corroboree Frogs.

Frogs are suffering extinction rates twice that of other animal groups. As Kevin Zippel pointed out at the launch, their extinction rate is thought to be up to 40,000 times as high as in the past. Kevin Zippel is the Program Director of the global Amphibian Ark Program.



Writer Bryce Courtenay showing the size of Cane Toads. Kevin Zippel and Zoo Director Guy Cooper (right).



Come and visit the tiny Corroboree Frogs at Taronga Zoo's new exhibit. While you're there, watch the playful snow leopard cubs Kamala and Sabu, be entertained by the seal and sea lion shows and check out the bird show. Phone 9969 2777 or visit www.zootopia.com.au for details.



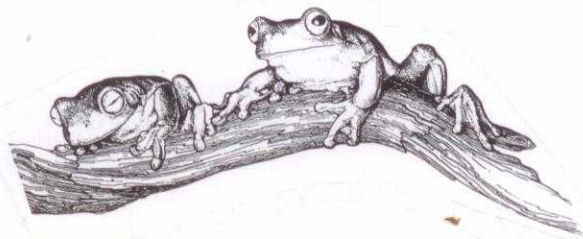
Raising Booroolong taddies in flowing water. Booroolong nursery cages as per Frogfacts No. 6.



Launching in: The keepers looking expectantly, while the ladies thought they were lining up to kiss the frogs. L.V.

FATS AGM NOTICE for 2008

The Frog and Tadpole Study group NSW inc (FATS) AGM will be held at the beginning of the 1st August 2008 FATS meeting, at 7pm. Building 22 Jamieson Street Homebush Bay (Sydney Olympic Park). If you would like to ask questions about joining the FATS committee, please give any of the committee members a call. Refer to the committee contact details in this newsletter page 12. No previous experience required. MW



HOW FROG FATHER GOT LAUNCHED

(Our older members from way back will remember Harald Ehmann, the FATS Group's founder, who has since been turning South Australia on its head. This is his Frog Leap Day post card from Adelaide. Read on. LV)

THREE DAYS IN THE LIFE OF A "HUMAN" FROG LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCES IN ADELAIDE

FRIDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2008 (FROG LEAP DAY) &

SATURDAY 1 & SUNDAY 2 MARCH 2008

(ADELAIDE FRINGE FESTIVAL)

The clobber

I hired a suit and headpiece and frog hand gloves. Shop around, hire varied from \$35 to \$65 for the weekend. I painted an old pair of sports shoes green (shoe paint from well-stocked repairer) and put in bright green laces (from repairer). I wore bright green or red sox.

The hired lycra body suit was bright green. In hiring I saw and avoided fluffy, grab able and hot materials. Lycra breathes well, but I still sweated heaps (27-32 °C). Be aware of a tight fitting suit esp. the crutch area (may get adverse and even nasty comments that distract from the main YOTF message), if in doubt wear bright shorts (red or green) to overcome any such distraction.



Have a draw string on back zip to open and close zip without help (coil and then tuck it away inside collar of suit. Attach smaller soft-toy hugging frogs to upper arms with safety pins through lycra (to prevent them being pulled off). Adjust size of head piece mouth opening with spring back clips on the inside. Wear a cap with spacer toweling to adjust headpiece height so can see out through mouth.

I washed the suit each evening, drying it overnight, so it was fresh and wearable next day, and to ensure people were not put off the cause by stale sweat smells.

Messages for the masses

Attach printed message A4 sheet to back of headpiece with blue tack. Attach printed message A4 sheet centrally to chest with safety pins. Write brief large flash messages on palms of gloves (be aware of left to right presentation TO THE AUDIENCE) eg right glove-"Bye Bye?" and left glove "Hope not!" with black text. Be aware that people want to have good news and hope, not doom and gloom. So "Bye Bye?" on both palms is a downer.



The streets etc circuit that I walked (about 10 times)

Rundle Mall (retail shopping precinct), Rundle Street East (al fresco eating and coffee shops stretch), The Fringe Festival performance and refreshments areas on the eastern parklands adjacent to Rundle Street East.

Non-verbal interactions

Practice head piece expressions in front of a mirror before going out in costume. Wave esp to children and females that are looking or who comment, also wave to males but give them two thumbs up if they are interactive but rushing, or they say "How are you" or say "Good onya".

Verbal interactions

Be prepared for many comments and questions like: I thought it was the year of the Rat You are wrong it's the year of the rat! (Incidentally, 2008 is also the UN's official Year of the Potato!!) (So put the three together and you get a strange soup??!?!?) Isn't it hot in there? "Yes I'm a walking sauna!" OR "Just like it is for frogs dealing with climate change". Can you give me one of your frogs (attached to sleeve)? Where is my freddo frog? Why are you doing this? "The frogs made me do it!!"

Compliment wearers of pleasing colours and clothing esp. bright greens and pertinent green/environmental T shirt messages. Make a point of engaging in brief discussion with at least 1 receptive person every 2 minutes and allow a longer discussion with at least 1 per 5 mins. Such discussions invite stronger look overs and interest from passers by. Make a point of communicating with children who seek interaction by hand shakes and/or hand waves: it is well received by parents, onlookers and passers by.

Try to finish off any conversation with: "Remember to do the google/ look up the website" (refer to handout slip, card or other material if you have it) and finally disengage with "Enjoy the day!" Always disengage quickly from anyone speaking negatively or belligerently with something like "Excuse me I've got to hop it!!"

Photographs

Some people will want a photograph of themselves or a friend with the frog. Try to display all the messages to the

camera, including palm flashes. Suggest a donation if you have support to collect, and permission to do so.

Hugs

Be prepared for people wanting a hug, but hug very softly (esp if you have safety pinned info on the chest!!).

Decline hugs from frivolous, larking and/or insincere people (esp. males) as they can turn very nasty with bear hugs, punches, verbal abuse and push away balks at the last second (see also below). Hugs from frivolous females did not turn malicious, but keep them very soft, brief and at their own initiation and use only one arm over their shoulder and no hand pressure anywhere. They can scare easily. Disabled persons frequently request a hug; take your cue from their carers.

Fears

Be aware that children under about 4 are curious but easily terrify if you get too close ie within 1 metre (they most likely will cringe from even touching an outstretched glove finger). Waves from a distance and shy-back gestures work.

Walk strategies

I walked only between the hours 10.30am and 6pm in daylight hours ie when there were plenty of people about. Don't walk at night without an assistant. Have a rest area you can escape to for a break and comfort necessities. Walk on the shady side of the street, work out a good circuit. Walk well behind a group so that oncoming people see you and your messages. Linger at traffic lights to get the attention of those who have almost crossed. When crossing walk at the back of the pack and be prominent for oncoming crossers, when they are passed or there are none wave to stopped cars.

People seated at al fresco tables are most receptive and interested, whereas rushing people approaching lights crossings are least interested. Avoid encroaching on or upstaging buskers, but note that some of them will actually draw you into a brief interaction to compliment their own act: play up to and amplify with whatever gesture will fit and synergise: everyone benefits and people like it. After my third walk-by of many buskers a funny interaction had gelled and worked.

Above all, be prepared for smiles galore!!

I estimated about 3300 persons passed me per hour over 15 hours in 2 ½ days ie 50000 passers by. About 80% of people responded positively with from a smile to yelps of delight to a hug. I had requests for hugs from about 50 adult persons, requests for photographs (usually with one or more friends) from about 200 persons. About 10% didn't notice or see me at all (or pretended so). About 5% responded neutrally ie looked at the frog (me) but did not show any reaction. About 5% responded negatively with a frown, scowl, caustic words, or physical aggression (see below).

That was about a 89% positive reaction rate!!!!!!!!!!!!
(discounting the 10% non-noticers). You may get to become a smiles junkie!!

Children, women of all ages, and men over 25 had the most positive responses. Asian people (irrespective of gender) responded more openly than all others.



Middle Eastern and African people (irrespective of gender) responded more guardedly/reluctantly.

When back in normal clothes

Walk some of the same frog walk circuit and observe the difference in people's reactions, but make sure you don't behave as you did as the frog! They will think you strange!! It is both sobering and a useful comparison to understand the power of a frog dressed person to elicit so many positive responses from otherwise neutral or disinterested people. The fact that there were so many positive responses means that there is potentially a huge favorable predisposition to frogs and therefore also their plight as these messages are put out throughout 2008 YOTF.

My conclusion: There is an overwhelming majority of people who are personally committed to make friendly connection with the cause, and frog walks are fantastic advertising for the cause. How else could a campaigner raise 40,000 smiles or better positive responses in 15 hours for the time investment of about 25 hours and about \$80 all up?

Aggression I experienced

I had about 1 aggressive physical act (attack) per hour. 11 of the 15 were malicious (ie painful) hard slaps to the shoulders and lower back and backside, hard punches to the body and arms, and excessively hard bear hugs. In the 2 ½ days I had one each of the following:

1. a late-age teenager pushed hard into my back from behind without warning ("he pushed me!") and I almost fell flat on my face,
2. a beefy 20+ bloke run at me from in front to knock me over rugby tackle style (I saw it coming and hopped aside, as best as I could!!),
3. someone tried to hug me with a lighted cigarette with the obvious intention of inflicting a burn on my back, and
4. the entire head piece was ripped off and withheld with a demand for money for its return (he got "You're a disgrace, **** off before I call the police!", he threw it back), he then did a body punch and a backside hit. Young males from 16 to 28 years of age did all of the 15 aggressions. Each was in a separate, unrelated peer group of three or more males.

continued from page 7

Recommendation: have an escort person

To hand out any printed material. Take promotional photographs for your own campaign. To take photographs for those who want one with the frog taken with their own camera. To accept any donations (be aware that any fundraising may require Council approval/licensing). I did not accept any money during these activities (did not apply for a license), but did suggest to some that they could donate to the cause, and to seek out a recipient through the YOTF websites ie do the google.

To help to avoid obstacles and control mobbing and a cascade of clutching, grabbing and pulling on small attached frogs or head gear esp by younger children and near-teens boys. To help with suit maintenance and adjustments (they are needed!!)



To watch out for and deflect any unwanted overly enthusiastic to aggressive approaches, especially young males with group bravado happening (see above).

A better headpiece than I had (if making one up) would include:

A more realistic frog shaped head. Bigger and more forward placed eyes, bigger pupils and less eye white. Smaller actual mouth opening but mouth opening definite and permanently open for looking out of, for air AND for speech getting out clearly to people who converse (the mouth in this suit was floppy and closed down easily). Mouth with a distinctive smile when viewed from a child's lower angle of view. No warts or other bumps (this head had rounded lumps on the back). Nostrils depressions but not holes (this head had neither).



I hope you can use the above information in your own YOTF cause. **Regards Harald Ehmann 04 2825 7585 wildworks@bigpond.com 3 March 2008.**



Frog Population resists Killer Fungus

A survey funded by the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife has made a discovery that spells hope for the future of the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog.

A population of these frogs at Lake Meroo seems to be resistant to the deadly chytrid fungus disease, which has already killed off hundreds of frog species worldwide.

The fungus is rapidly spreading across the world, affecting the frogs' skin and causing them to suffocate. The disease flourishes in warm climates and appears to spread even faster with global warming. Scientists believe that the distinct chemical make-up of the water in Lake Meroo acts as a natural fungicide that kills the fungus but does not harm the frogs.

The lake is brackish and occasionally open to the sea, providing ideal conditions for sulphur releasing bacteria to grow in the bed of the lake. Sulphur like copper, is a natural fungicide, that kills the fungus but is not harmful to the frogs. Copper, is found at other sites where the frog survives, such as Port Kembla steelworks near Wollongong.

Scientists are yet to establish if and how this discovery can be used to protect other wild populations of Green and Golden Bell Frogs from the fungus. **Image: © Lance Jurd <http://fnpw.org.au/News/News2.htm>**



Litoria fallax amplexing photo Ben Harrington

ANCIENT "DEVIL FROG" MAY HAVE EATEN BABY DINOSAURS



It was the biggest, baddest, meanest froggy ever to have hopped on Earth. Scientists on Monday announced the discovery in northwestern Madagascar of a bulky amphibian dubbed the "devil frog" that lived 65 million to 70 million years ago and was so nasty it may have eaten newborn dinosaurs.

This brute was larger than any frog living today and may be the biggest frog ever to have existed, according to paleontologist David Krause of Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, New York, one of the scientists who found the remains.

Its name, *Beelzebufo ampinga*, came from Beelzebub, the Greek for devil, and *bufo* -- Latin for toad. *Ampinga* means "shield," named for an armor-like part of its anatomy.

Beelzebufo (pronounced bee-el-zeh-BOOF-oh) was 16 inches long and weighed an estimated 10 pounds (4.5 kg). It was powerfully built and possessed a very wide mouth and powerful jaws. It probably didn't dine daintily.

"It's not outside the realm of possibility that *Beelzebufo* took down lizards and mammals and smaller frogs, and even -- considering its size -- possibly hatchling dinosaurs," Krause said in a telephone interview. "It would have been quite mean," added paleontologist Susan Evans of University College London, another of the scientists.

Their findings were published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Even though it lived far away, *Beelzebufo* appears to be closely related to a group of frogs that live today in South America, the scientists said. They are nicknamed "Pac-Man" frogs due to their huge mouths. Some have little horns on their heads, and the scientists think *Beelzebufo* also may have had horns -- a fitting touch for the "devil frog."

Beelzebufo was bigger than any of its South American kin or any other living frog -- "as if it was on steroids,"

Krause said. The largest one today is the goliath frog of West Africa, up to 12.5 inches long and 7.2 pounds (3.3 kg).

The presence of *Beelzebufo* in Madagascar and its modern relatives in South America is the latest sign a long-lost land bridge once may have linked Madagascar to Antarctica -- much warmer then -- and South America, the scientists said.

That would have let animals move overland among those land masses. Fossils have been found of other animals in Madagascar from *Beelzebufo*'s time similar to South American ones.

KING OF FROGS

The first frogs appeared about 180 million years ago, and their basic body plan has remained unchanged. *Beelzebufo* lived during the Cretaceous Period at the end of the age of dinosaurs, which went extinct along with many other types of animals 65 million years ago when a huge space rock clobbered Earth.

Beelzebufo did not live an aquatic lifestyle, hopping among lily pads, the scientists said. Instead, it lived in a semi-arid environment and may have hunted like its modern-day relatives, which camouflage themselves and jump out at prey.

Its first fragmentary fossils were found in 1993, and the scientists have since assembled enough fragments to piece its remains together like a jigsaw puzzle, Krause said.

While it was the king of frogs, *Beelzebufo* is not the largest amphibian ever to have lived. Many reached truly astounding dimensions, such as the crocodile-like *Prionosuchus* that grew to an estimated 30 feet during the Permian Period, which ended about 250 million years ago. **WASHINGTON (Reuters) – article by Will Dunham (Editing by Peter Cooney) forwarded to FrogCall by Arthur White 18 Feb 2008**
<http://www.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUSN1522665720080218?sp=true> giant *Beelzebufo ampinga* of Madagascar
www.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUSN1522665720080218



Litoria tyleri photo Ben Harrington



FROGS SPAWN A BACKYARD WAR

For such a tiny creature, the striped marsh frog is causing a big disturbance in a Sydney street. The prized pets of 72-year-old Margaret Pratt have led to a neighbourhood feud that has escalated to Cold War proportions.

The battle between Blacktown residents Mrs Pratt and her neighbours Anne and Neil Clark over the backyard frog breeding program has turned so nasty that council, police and lawyers have been called in. Mrs Pratt said the fight began four years ago with a complaint about the noise being made by one frog, which had hopped on to the Clarks' property and made its home in a water pipe, keeping them awake. Since then, the great-grandmother - who also raises green frogs - claims her plants have been poisoned, forcing her to install security cameras trained on her beloved "secret garden". Mrs Pratt said her neighbours had countered the cameras by shining blinding spotlights at them. "It started to get really nasty two years ago," she said yesterday.

While Mrs Pratt has no proof who is responsible, she has had oil poured into her tadpole ponds, white powder (believed to be frog-killing Coopex) thrown at her house and garden, her plants have been poisoned and dead rats thrown into her yard. Mrs Clark refused to comment yesterday, saying the matter was in the hands of lawyers.

Mrs Pratt claims she has also had her every action filmed on mobile phone cameras. The stress is having a serious effect on her health and that of her 81-year-old husband, an emphysema sufferer who spends much of the day on an oxygen machine. Mrs Pratt went to police and council with her allegations but was told they could do nothing without proof. So she installed the security cameras.

However, she claims the Clarks installed a row of party lights down the side of their garage, with the glare distorting images from the cameras. Mrs Pratt admits she is not perfect, having blacked out the Clarks' lights. She also snapped a picture of Mr Clark on his roof and turned it into a cheeky Christmas card decorated with frogs, which she sent to him. But she denied allegations she stuck nails in the Clark's car tyres.

"I probably shouldn't have taken the picture of him and given him the card, but I'm just so fed up," she said. "We've been neighbours for 30 years and we used to be friends." "I'm just so shocked at all this nastiness over a few frogs. "Even though this is causing me a lot of stress, I'll never part with my frogs." A council spokesman said frogs were not covered under noise legislation. **by Edith Bevin 6/3/08 forwarded by Joe Dimech**
<http://www.news.com.au:80/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,23324878-5006009,00.html>

FIELD TRIPS

FATS field trips have concluded for the 2007/8 season. Our Spring / Summer program recommences in September 2008. We would like to thank Robert Wall our Field trip Coordinator for his tireless work over the last few years. All FATS activities are carried out by unpaid members and would not be possible without the commitment of our willing volunteers. We would like to thank all our wonderful fieldtrip leaders who put so much time into the planning & organisation of each fieldtrip. Without this network of people, with an intimate knowledge of their local 'backyard' our programme would be a lot poorer. More importantly, we have been able to show members virtually all the frog species that occur in the greater Sydney region. We would also like to once again acknowledge the kindness and great assistance of The Sydney Olympic Park Authority, Forests NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service of NSW and our good friends at the University of NSW (owners of the Smiths Lake Field Studies Station). Their co-operation makes the task of putting together a yearly programme so much easier.

FROGS AT THE EASTER SHOW



Spectacular frog art by FATS member Jane Davenport

INSURANCE DISCLAIMER FATS has public liability insurance for its various public functions. 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 about 7.00pm and end about 10.00pm, on the **first Friday of every EVEN month** (February, April, June, August, October and December), at Building 22, RANAD, off Jamieson St, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush Bay (accessible by car, train or bus). We hold 6 informative, informal, topical and practical meetings each year. Visitors are welcome. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations, other field studies, produce the newsletter FROGCALL & 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 acknowledge

IN THE middle of a wilderness, in the middle of the night, we are searching for frogs' eyes.

It is pitch black and we are up to our shins in the frigid waters of Bogong Creek in Kosciuszko National Park at an altitude of 1100 metres.

Amid the splashing of rapids Dr Dave Hunter, a threatened-species officer with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and Mike McFadden, a herpetologist at Taronga Zoo, are looking for sparkles the size of dewdrops. From the thick, tall forest of alpine ash beside the creek there is the call of an endangered yellow-bellied glider. Conversation is hard above the constant rush of water over boulders, following a summer of good rain.

Caught by the glow of our torches, a native fish called mountain galaxids can be seen swimming around crystal-clear pools. "An abundance of mountain galaxids indicates an absence of trout," Hunter says.

Trout are an enemy of frogs and native fish. The fact that the exotic fish - known to many scientists as foxes of the water - are not here is what helps to make Bogong Creek such a special place.

"I've got one," says McFadden.

It is amazing that Hunter and McFadden saw these two pinpoint of light reflected in their small spotlights and even more incredible that they are there at all.

The pinpoints are the eyes of a spotted tree frog, perhaps the most endangered animal in NSW. Just a decade ago the

species was represented in this creek by a lone male. So dire were the prospects of the spotted tree frog in Bogong Creek that in 1998 the decision was taken to catch the last male and bring him into captivity at the Amphibian Research Centre near Melbourne. There the frog was mated with captured females from an endangered Victorian population at Wheeler Creek.

That last male was given the nickname Dirk Diggler, after the mythical porn star. Instead of Roller Girl, Dirk's partners are known as the Wheeler Girls.

"Dirk has got a lot to be proud of," McFadden says.

In the last two years the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change and the Amphibian Research Centre in Melbourne have been able to release 600 of Dirk's offspring as year-old frogs.

Tonight, Hunter and McFadden are doing a survey along 300 metres of Bogong Creek to determine how well these young frogs are faring. In the last year 150 of these young captive-reared frogs have been accounted for by the team's surveys.

Every few weeks over summer a party walks up the exact same stretch, following the same survey methods. The work is far removed from simply emptying a bucket of tadpoles back into Bogong Creek - strict protocols have been written and everything is done according to rigorous scientific rules.

Spotted tree frogs were discovered by accident in NSW in 1973 when Dr Hal Cogger, of the

Australian Museum, stopped his car by Bogong Creek and found them basking in the sun. At that time the area was thick with the amphibians and catching them was easy.

Among herpetologists the find was a sensation. But almost as soon as monitoring was started, the frog population declined disastrously. Scientists started to find sick and dying frogs but no one knew the cause of the catastrophe.

Hunter says it now seems almost certain that a fungus

called chytrid is killing and infecting frogs worldwide. It is also now thought that humans may play a part in the spread of the pathogen. The population collapse is of particular concern to Hunter as he was part of those early surveys when he was an undergraduate.

HUNTER points to where he and McFadden have found the spotted tree frog. The creature is on a steep, downstream face of a boulder.

He catches it and stretches out its toes. Because these captive-reared frogs are virtually identical to each other, scientists clip their toe joints so they can follow the life history of each released animal. The absence of a digit on the frog's feet correlates to a code which allows each specimen to be numbered.

"He is individual 1088," Hunter says. "He was released as a year-old animal in January '07. Now we are going to process him."

Frog 1088 weighs in at a wispy 4.18 grams and is measured before his toes, fingers, armpits and groin are swabbed. The swab sample will be sent to the CSIRO Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong to determine if he is infected with the chytrid fungus.

Releasing such precious captive-reared frogs back into Bogong Creek is a big gamble but one the scientists feel they have to take. Hunter's team hopes that the frogs can build up some sort of resistance to the fungus, which will mean that their chance of survival is much better in the long term.

Their fear is that sending captive-bred frogs into the wild is like ordering soldiers out of a trench in front of an enemy machine-gun post.

By the end of the evening Hunter and McFadden have found eight young frogs. It is nearly 11pm by the time the scientists reach the end of the survey. As we clamber up the bank and onto the first clear, level land we have seen since dusk, McFadden says: "You have just seen a species that was extinct in NSW."



Frog conservationist and amphibian zookeeper at Taronga Zoo, Michael McFadden, says that in the last decade alone, the vividly patterned yellow and black corroboree frog (pictured) has all but disappeared from its habitat in Mount Kosciuszko National Park. Booroolong frogs once populated vast areas of vegetation across the Southern, Central and Northern NSW Tablelands, but now only exist in a few creek beds within that region.

Forwarded to FrogCall by Phillip Grimm Sydney's City Weekly 31 Jan 08 p12 Clock on: interview Frog man Conservationists And Targona zookeeper Michael McFadden warns that many frog species are on their last legs By Emma Page photo Rick Stevens Losing large numbers of frogs is going to have a huge impact on the food chain

Early research into frog extinctions pointed to land clearing, introduced predators and climate change as the major causes. McFadden says global warming in particular poses long-term problems for corroboree and Booroolong frogs.

The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums has declared 2008 the Year of the Frog in a bid to raise awareness about the alarming decline in frog numbers around the world. Internationally, the association hopes to raise \$US60 million, while the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria aims to raise \$A400,000 to establish captive breeding programs. The money will also go toward research into Chytrid fungus and field-based conservation projects.

Taronga Zoo holds eight frog species and has set up special captive breeding programs for corroboree and Booroolong frogs. McFadden works with more than 200 corroboree frogs that live in a refrigerated container on public display at the zoo. "The frogs are doing really well. We've only just recently got adult frogs that we can breed from. In the past we've just been rearing juvenile frogs from eggs to tadpoles to adult frogs and those frogs are growing quite well. This year is going to be the first attempt to

breed our adult-aged frogs. So we're hoping that is going to be successful."

It will also be the first year the zoo will trial the release of Booroolong populations into the wild.

McFadden says losing entire species of frogs has a great impact on local ecosystems and biodiversity.

Frog extinction also directly effects humanity. McFadden gives the example of Australia's rare breed of gastric breeding frog, which vanished in the 1980s.

"Gastric breeding frogs could raise their young in their stomach and could switch on and off hormones and digestive acids - that could have been used to treat stomach ulcers and all kinds of things.

"Frogs have many chemicals in their skin so a lot have been used for health reasons. There's ones that have been used for painkillers, for non-toxic glues and surgery, for arthritis. Even in the Australian red-eye tree frog they found a substance in their skin that blocks the AIDS virus. And that's only recent research."

"Overall, the aim of our projects is to ensure the existence of these species so our children and grandchildren can see and hear these frogs calling in the wild. Frogs are really cute and from learning about them you get a greater respect for the creature."

FATS undertakes various field trips and excursions into areas where frogs occur. The aim of these excursions is to allow people to appreciate frogs in the wild as well as to permit limited research and observations of frog behaviour and ecology. Because these activities are inherently disruptive, all measures must be taken to minimize the impacts on frogs and frog habitats. One particular impact that is hard to recognize is that of spreading diseases through frog populations.

Two exotic diseases (chytrid and Ranavirus) are now present in New South Wales and both are capable of exterminating local frog populations. Both diseases are highly infectious and easily transported by people (although they don't affect humans). The following precautions must be followed at every FATS field trip. If you are about to undertake an activity that you think may be disruptive to frogs, please consult the field trip co-ordinator who will assess the risk and may invoke additional changes to the field trip protocols.

1. Before you go into a frog area, sterilise your boots and all other equipment that may have come in contact with water. The field trip co-ordinator will have a foot bath with disinfectant available.
2. Do not drive from wetland to wetland. Keep the vehicle out of water if possible. If you have to move between wetland sites, disinfect the underside of the vehicle before moving between areas. The field trip co-ordinator will have spray disinfectant available.
3. When you have arrived at a site, stay together as group. If you spread out you will disturb many animals and may not see the animals that you came to see in the first place. The field trip co-ordinator will explain any hazards associated with each site and where frogs of interest may be found.
4. Do not handle frogs unless it is necessary. Observe them at a distance.
5. If you have to handle frogs, use sterile gloves.
6. One person should be nominated as the frog handler in each group. This person will have a supply of gloves (gloves are to be changed each time a frog is to be picked up).
7. If frogs are being photographed or moved for photographing, the frog handler will do this. The frogs are to be returned to the original location as soon as practicable afterwards.
8. If frogs are placed in plastic bags for transport or holding, the bags cannot be reused to hold other frogs, equipment or for any other materials that could come in contact with other frogs.
9. Any items of equipment that become wet during your stay at a frog site must be considered a potentially infected item and should be disinfected or replaced before going to another site.
10. If you have become wet during the visit to the frog area, you must be considered as a potential source of infection. Clothing, hands, boots etc that have been wet should be disinfected or replaced before going to another site.
11. Do not take frogs or tadpoles from one area to another.
12. Do not collect or move water or soil between frog sites.
13. If you encounter a sick or dead frog, alert the field trip co-ordinator. This frog may be collected and taken back for further study. The field trip co-ordinator will also carry preserving fluids for frog carcasses.

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