

# FROG CALL

NEWSLETTER No. 99  
February 2009

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Photo by David Nelson



Amplexing Roth's Tree Frogs, *Litoria rothii*



## MEETING FORMAT for 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009

- 6.30 pm Lost frogs needing homes. Please bring your FATS membership card, donation and amphibian licence to home a froggy friend.
- 7.00 pm Welcome and announcements.
- 7.30 pm The main speaker is Jodi Rowley  
"Frogging in the Wet Tropics of Australia".  
Peter Spradbrow will be talking about frogging in the New England region.  
Grant Webster is going to talk about his frog trips to the border region of NSW and Queensland.  
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.

Join us at our next meeting  
Arrive at 6.30pm for a 7.00 pm start

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

end of Jamieson St. (off Holker Street),  
Follow the signs to Building 22  
Homebush Bay, Sydney Olympic Park  
Accessible by bus or train. Call us for details.

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### LAST FATS MEETING 5<sup>TH</sup> December 2008

**The winners of the Frogographic competition including the "People's Choice" award, were announced. Congratulations to:**

- Aaron Payne best adult photo and People's Choice award,
- Miguel Diaz Best junior photo,
- Marie Callins best senior art work and most interesting,
- Ryan Little best junior art work,
- Chloe Newnam most interesting junior art work (wall mural)
- all the participants.

Photos will appear in Frogcall soon.

Barbara Harrison from All Things Slimy, [www.allthingsslimey.com.au](http://www.allthingsslimey.com.au) spoke about the Cairns Frog Hospital and new frog diseases being identified there. Deborah Pergaloti (right) runs the hospital and manages the Frog Decline Reversal Project. Barbara and her husband David attended a frog disease course at the Frog Hospital.



The Cairns Frog Hospital is small at the moment but its Curator, Deborah, has been receiving sick and injured frogs since August 1998. Over 1,900 frogs have been turned in. Most of the injured frogs can be recovered and released back to the wild. Diseased frogs are another story, however. The complex of conditions they have been receiving includes problems not being reported from any other part of the country and therefore, these diseases have not been identified and cures are not yet known. Frogs which don't survive are preserved so that they can be tested for diseases. Once they know what pathogen is involved, they can find out if a successful treatment is available or if there is a prevention so that they can save frogs from these illnesses. The following are extracts from

<http://www.fdrproject.org.au/index.html>

The Cairns Frog Hospital serves as a receiving station for sick frogs. Many of these have turned out to have very unusual conditions or diseases which hadn't been seen in those species before.

One of the significant findings thus far has been the arrival of several frogs which have been diagnosed with skin cancer - a condition previously considered to be extremely rare. They have also received at least a dozen frogs with other types of growths. Such discoveries remind us of frogs' reputation as environmental indicators.

The sort of work they do is very expensive and they have received only a small amount of money from the Commonwealth government. They are currently involved in a major research project with CSIRO, JCU and the Registry of Wildlife Pathology to investigate their new diseases, but the funding they receive as a participant in that project does not cover the care and recovery of any frog which is returned to the wild.

They must still raise that money themselves and this has been extremely difficult.

#### Some amphibian disease problems and illnesses:

- immuno-deficiency complex - probably viral but includes a large list of secondary pathogens.
- respiratory/nervous system disease - probably a drought-tolerant soil fungus.
- cancer and other neoplasias - almost certainly caused by oncogenic herpes viruses.
- the "Redlynch" virus - an unidentified virus found during sequencing (electrophoresis).
- hyperbiliriverdism - an undescribed disorder somewhat similar to jaundice in reptiles, possibly involving an adenovirus.
- unidentified bacterial and fungal toxins - these became especially problematic after category 5 cyclone Larry in March 2006.
- Metabolic bone disease caused by a lack of calcium.
- Burns from incorrect lighting.
- Spirometra tape worm from cats and dogs
- Bladder worms – segments appear as red dust

#### Fungal diseases:

- Chytrid fungus - the world's most publicised amphibian disease.
- *Mucor amphibiorum* - a soil fungus causing mucormycosis, a fatal condition for which no cure has yet been found; this disease also affects Platypus, especially in eastern Tasmania



**Photo George Madani** A healthy *Litoria verreaxi*

- the new "respiratory/nervous system" disease - this remains unidentified in the lab but they have received well over 600 cases of it; the nervous system is attacked and a predictable collection of subtle symptoms results but standard histology does not reveal its presence or indeed, even a cause of death, because the tissues are undamaged - all damage is to the nervous system - this is likely to be a drought tolerant soil fungus, possibly producing a mycotoxin and it has serious implications for climate change modelling.

#### **Viral diseases:**



- the "Redlych" virus (left) - named after the Cairns suburb where they first learned of the disease; the virus has been found by sequencing but remains unidentified and will be given a proper name once isolated and characterised.
- the immuno-deficiency complex - a new problem first uncovered in the White-lipped and Common Green (White's in North America) tree frogs (*Litoria infrafrenata* and

*Litoria caerulea*) in 1999; because this problem is so species-specific and appears to have a link with other virus problems, they believe the primary pathogen involved is probably a virus; once this problem 'activates' in the frog, it is overrun by a long list of simultaneous secondary problems including severe, multiple parasite infestations, skin degenerative conditions, hyperbilirveridism, neoplasias, environmental fungi and bacteria, and other independent diseases. This disease complex is currently the subject of a collaborative research project.

#### **Bacterial problems:**

- Aeromonas hydrophilla* ("Red leg") is one of the most commonly encountered problems in captive amphibians but this can also become a widespread problem in the wild, as it did in the UK in 2004.
- Environmental bacteria and fungi - these refer to bacteria and fungi which are found everywhere in the environment (including inside the guts of amphibians) but are background/incidental pathogens which are not problematic to a healthy animal; however, these can erupt into a life threatening problem if the circumstances allow such as when the immune system is compromised, the animal is stressed, or ecological imbalances are created.

#### **Parasites:**

- Bot fly larvae (*Batrachomyia*) - a temporary parasite in local frogs which can be tolerated if only one or two larvae are present but life threatening when more than three are present - they've observed that drought actually reduces the incidence of these freeloaders!

#### **Cancer:**

- the numbers of cancer, squamous cell carcinomas and other tumours (neoplasias) found in local frogs is excessive on a global scale: 23 cases at the Frog Hospital as of May 13<sup>th</sup>.

Adopt a frog cards can be purchased for \$5 or sold for fundraising for the hospital. Deborah Pergaloti can be contacted on 07 4045 0373 afternoons and evenings, to discuss frog disease identification and treatment. Or email sick frog photo and enquiry to [curator@fdrproject.org.au](mailto:curator@fdrproject.org.au) Please read <http://www.fdrproject.org.au/pages/contact.htm> before you call them. Editors Note: I hope that any assistance Deborah provides would encourage you to send an appropriate donation to the Frog Hospital.

Henry Cook presented many photos from his wildlife surveys and field work in Northern Queensland and Weipa. These included a red belly black snake with no red belly ("came back" despite Cane Toads), green ring tailed possums, giant white tailed rat (which can get to a kilo in weight), spectacled flying foxes, the Northern version of *Litoria lesueuri*, leaf tailed geckos, keelbacks and lots of frog photos of course. Frog photos included *Rana daemeli* wood frog, found right next to a *Crinia remota* Remote Froglet. Other spectacular photos included a slim lined dragon, skinks, a cane field rat, cockatoos, spotted Cape York python, scrub python, Cape York tree rat, a blue phase tree snake, Hercules moth, a night jar and many more animals all expertly photographed.

Annie Neilson presented Venezuelan and Bolivian photos taken in May and June 2008, including flamingos, a pink river dolphin, a three toed sloth, a spider monkey, camen, woodpecker, macaw, a huge black grasshopper, a variety of birds, iguanas and several frogs.

The meeting ended with a light Christmas supper, sushi, nibbles, home made cakes and drinks. MW

#### **Photo George Madani** *Litoria coplandi alpina*



## MURRAY RIVER RED GUMS RESCUE



TAKE ACTION NOW!

**Australia has the two largest River Red Gum forests in the world. The health of the Murray River and its River Red Gum Forests are intrinsically linked - a healthy river needs healthy forests. However, our River Red Gum Forests are not healthy - in some areas 75% of the trees are already stressed, dead or dying and they are further being degraded by destructive logging and grazing.**

The Red Gum forests act as filters for the river - if the New South Wales Government is serious about protecting the health of the Murray River, then it needs to protect our River Red Gums.

Often referred to as 'The Kakadu of the South' these forests are also vitally important habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species and play host to many thousands of migratory birds each year. They also attract tourists to the region, who are an important part of the region's economy. Logging, primarily for low value products such as firewood, fence posts and railway sleepers, is destroying the very values that the forests have become famous for.

**Replacing logging with well managed National Parks will protect the forests, ensure that the Murray retains its filter system and continue to provide vital income to the region.**

The New South Wales government needs to urgently commit to creating National Parks from our State Forests in full consultation with local traditional owners. The state's River Red Gum forests provide important habitats for threatened and endangered species and migratory birds.

The red gums also act as filters for the Murray River so the health of the forests is fundamentally linked to the well-being of Australia's vital water system.

In some areas of NSW up to 75 per cent of red gums are stressed, dead or dying. They risk being further damaged by the effects of logging and grazing.

Did you know that an estimated 95 per cent of River Red Gums logged in NSW are used for low-value products such as fence posts, railway sleepers and firewood?

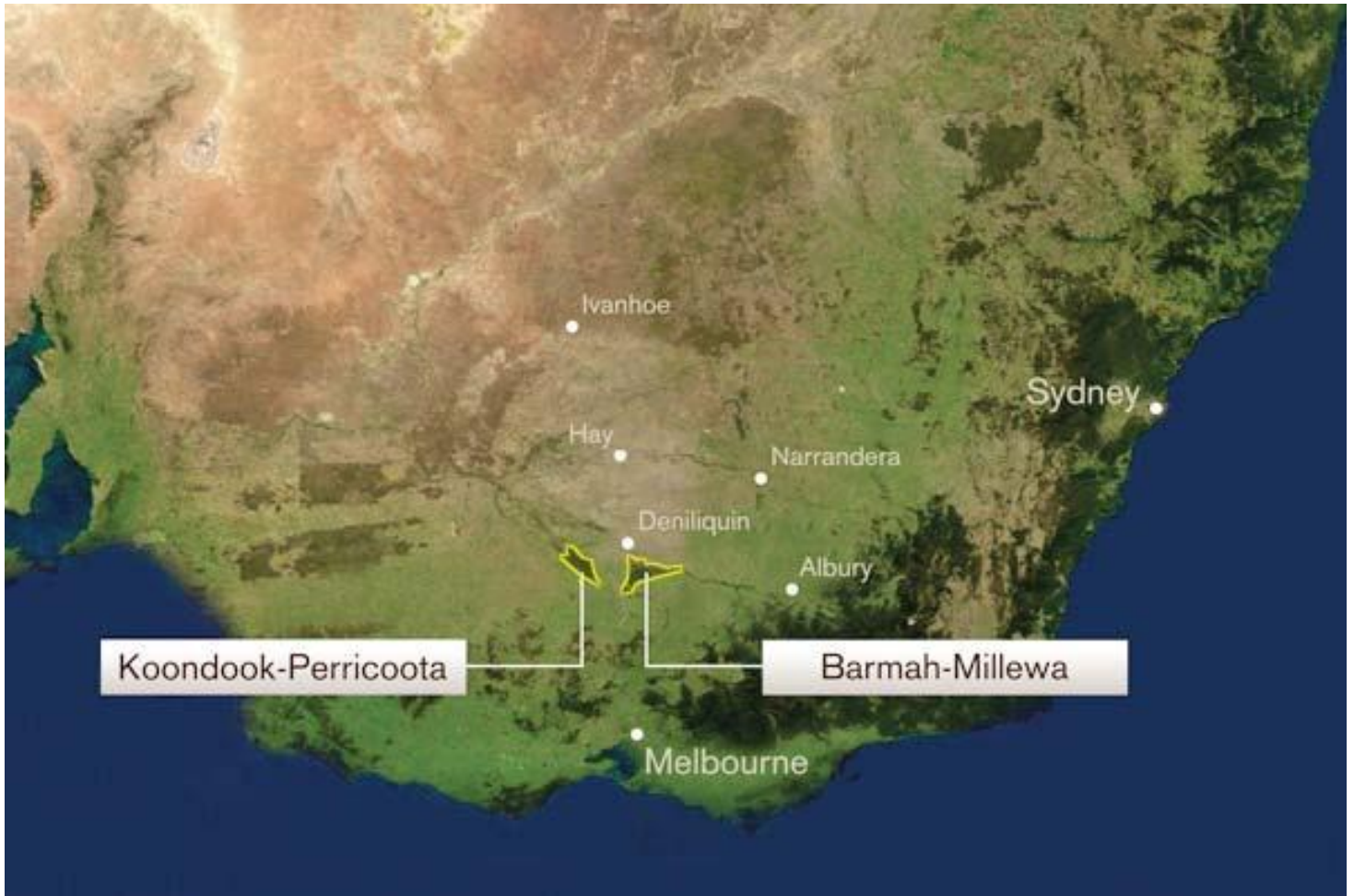
**The Wilderness Society Sydney Inc Postal address:  
PO Box K249 Haymarket, NSW, 1240 Suite 402,  
Level 4, 64-76 Kippax St, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010  
Phone: 02 9282 9553**



Often referred to as 'The Kakadu of the South', these forests are vitally important habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species - and play host to many thousands of migratory birds each year. Barmah State Forest.  
Photographer: R. Jung



## NSW's River Red Gum forests need your help



**Take Action:** The New South Wales government needs to urgently commit to creating National Parks from our State Forests in full consultation with local traditional owners. Send your support to new NSW Premier Nathan Rees. Your personal message can be sent by letter, fax, phone or email to:

**NSW Premier Nathan Rees, Level 40 Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, SYDNEY NSW 2000**  
**Post mail to GPO Box 5341, SYDNEY NSW 2001**    **phone (02) 9228 5239**    **fax (02) 9228 3934**  
**Email** [toongabbie@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:toongabbie@parliament.nsw.gov.au)    [thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au](mailto:thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au)

**SAMPLE LETTER** Please add your own comments, name and contact details.

Please act now to rescue our River Red Gum Forests!

Dear Premier Rees,

**[Your personal message will be included here]**

The Riverina bioregion is one of the most poorly-reserved in the country. The River Red Gum Forests are an ecosystem now threatened with total and irreversible collapse as a result of man-made changes in river flows that have caused widespread death and decline of trees. Logging of River Red Gum in NSW has a massive environmental impact, particularly industrial patch-clearfelling. An urgent commitment is needed by the NSW Government to start a rapid reserve assessment process to deliver new National Parks from State Forests and to restructure the logging industry in the region.

There should be a thorough consultation process with indigenous traditional owner groups in the region, based on informed consent, that determines what their aspirations may be for River Red Gum public lands in the region and ensures there is joint management of new National Parks wherever that is sought by indigenous nations.

Please act now. It's the perfect time to deliver an historic, cross-border conservation outcome along the Murray River. The very survival of the River Red Gum Forests depends on it

Sincerely

**[Your name and full address will be included here]**

Blue mountains tree frog, *Litoria citropa*



Photo by David Nelson

Stonemasons Toadlet *Uperoleia lithomoda*



Photo George Madani



Photo George Madani *Litoria tornieri* - Tornier's Frog



David Nelson Leaf Green tree frog, *Litoria phyllochroa*

Photo George Madani Nyngan



Photo George Madani *Megastilotis lignarius*  
*Cyclorana platycephala* - Water-holding Frog



*Neobatrachus sudelli* - Trilling Frog



Photo George Madani Nyngan

# Coke clear to pump extra water, court says

**Ben Cubby**  
Environment Reporter

COCA-COLA has won a court victory to pump up to 66 million litres of water from Mangrove Mountain on the Central Coast to supply its growing bottled water empire.

The Land and Environment Court ruled on Wednesday that the company could extract the water on a trial basis, but some landowners and environmentalists are upset that the company has been allowed to take more water while others cannot.

The initial allocation at Coke's bore was for 25 million litres.

The company pays \$200 for a water extraction licence and sells the water - which is identical to tapwater albeit with a much higher carbon footprint - in plastic bottles for more than \$10 million a year.

Each plastic bottle takes a fifth of a litre of crude oil to make, says the NSW Department of Environment, which has unofficially banned bottled water in its offices.

"If it is seen as environmentally damaging for others to take water, it should be the same for Coke," said a nearby resident, Peter Campbell, who has joined a group of others in opposition to the company's expansion.

A spokeswoman for Coca-Cola Amatil, Sally Loane, said that because Coke was a big company it was perceived as a big target.

"Every drop of water we use is measured, monitored and publicly reported to the State Government, the local council and our immediate neighbour, every hour of every day, year after year," Ms Loane said. "We know of no other water user on Mangrove Mountain - water bottlers, sand miners or farmers - whose water use is as transparent and scrutinised as ours."

An independent, three-year study of water use in the district found Coke's extra water use would continue to affect the ecosystem, but that it would be negligible. The impact would probably be limited to slowing the flow of a creek, and would not

affect the water table much. Dr Noel Merrick, a groundwater expert at University of Technology Sydney, said. "There will be impacts, but those impacts are relatively small," he said.

Coke's expansion plans at Mangrove Mountain were vetoed by Gosford City Council, partly in response to community concerns, but the court decision allows Coke to take water until 2011.

Opponents have said they will pressure Coke and the NSW Government, which issues and approves water licences, to regulate and scale back the bottled water industry. Australians spend about \$385 million on 250 million litres of bottled water a year, a Department of Environment spokeswoman said.

"With climate change and the drought, and all the pressures on water supplies, we have to look at [if] we should be allowing multinational companies like Coke to be extracting so much water for sale," Cate Faehrmann, the director of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, said.

## By Robin Williams

A third Cane toad in as many months has been found in North Bellingen sparking calls for residents to help identify the extent of the problem.

Ric George a member of WIRES reptile coordinating team said it was important to have any suspected toad formally identified.

"The toads look similar to a couple of threatened species of Great Barred Frog that include the Giant Barred Frog and Fleay's Barred Frog and are protected by the Threatened species Act."

"So we really need to get them ID'ed first before trying to destroy them."

"The last three I have identified all for Hobson Close have come back positive as cane toads."

He said all three cases had been reported to National Parks.

During the last six months there have been several other reported sightings of cane toads within the town area but these were not positively identified.

Mr George said now was the time to find out how wide spread the toads had become and has called on local residents to help out.

local residents to help out.

"We need people to really start checking out their area so we can get an idea of the extent of the problem."

"Kids are the best they get into areas that adults don't always go and they are a lot more observant."

"But it's important to remember they have poison glands just behind the ear region, never handle them without gloves."

"If you find one secure it in a container where the lid won't come off and contact WIRES, Brad Nesbitt from National Parks or the Bellingen Council's pest species officer Ian Turnbull."

Mr George said as the toads are nocturnal another way to identify them was their call.

"All frogs and toads have a unique call which identifies them as easily as sight and you can get a CD off National Parks so you can listen of an evening."

Mr George said residents should remember that as well as the threat to the shires native biodiversity the toads posed a significant threat to

domestic pets.

"It's not just native wildlife, its domestic pets and even small children that need to be careful."

"The area is full of little creeks and semi permanent-water supplies and frogs and toads like still water."

"In North Bellingen there is a sediment dam that runs into Ringwood Creek just below the area where the toads have been found, those are the types of environments to look."

Dogs have been known to die within 15mins of eating a cane toad and their toxins can kill most native animals that normally eat frogs.

Mr George said as the toads were cold blooded they became more active at this time of the year as the temperature rose.

Cane toads can accidentally spread in mulch, soil, pot plants, building material and through hitching under caravans or other vehicles.

For breeding populations to establish in a new location both a female and male cane toad need be present as males fertilise the eggs as they are laid by the female.

Once established cane toads can spread quickly.

A female cane toad can deposit up to 30,000 eggs at a time and may lay several times over a summer season.

The checklist below may assist residents decide whether to have a suspected cane toad identified.

\*Adult cane toads are usually between 9 and 15 cm long

\*Their skin is dry, rough and warty

\*Colouring varies from grey, olive brown to red-brown

\*Large sacks on each shoulder are toxin producing glands called the Parotoid gland

\*A pointed snout with a bony ridge from above the eye to the nose

\*Cane toads do not have any obvious barring on their legs or any bright colour between their legs.

Useful information on identification is available from the website [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)

Residents finding suspected cane toads can ring

WIRES on 66527119, National Parks Dorrigo on 66572309 and ask for Brad Nesbitt or Bellingen Council on 66557300.



Ric George with the latest identified cane toad found in Bellingen.  
Insert: The poison gland called the Parotoid gland is found just behind the ear area  
Photos Robin Williams



## HOUSING PUTS WOODLAND IN DANGER

**S**tate Government scientific advisers have warned that a rare forest in western Sydney, to be used for a new housing development, is full of species on the brink of extinction.

The NSW Scientific Committee has urged that the Cumberland Plain Woodland, which harbours rare parrots, quolls and owls, be listed as one of only three critically endangered ecological communities in the state. About 20 per cent of the woodland, near St Marys, is set to be cleared for housing.

"It has been death by a thousand cuts," said Professor Lesley Hughes, chairman of the scientific committee. "When the ... woodland was listed as endangered [in 1997] it was estimated there was 6 per cent left of its pre-European state, but we have realised it is in even more trouble than we first thought. It's declined by about 400 hectares since 2003 and it continues to be cleared because of pressure for housing." Professor Hughes, a biological scientist at Macquarie University, said housing plans set out in the planning department's north-west and south-west growth centres would "clear a further 20 per cent of what's left".

Upgrading its listing status from endangered to critically endangered would not offer the woodland any formal protection from further clearing but could influence the decisions of council planners, the Government and Land and Environment Court judges, she said. At least 65 hectares of the woodland is under threat from a proposed development at St Mary's, about 45 kilometres west of the CBD.

The joint developers ComLand and Lend Lease have lodged plans with Penrith City Council to build at least 2450 dwellings on a 229 hectare portion of the land called the Western Precinct. The developers' own biodiversity assessment estimated development could result in the removal or disturbance of about 65.2 hectares of the woodland.

Geoff Brown of the Western Sydney Conservation Alliance called on the Minister for Planning, Kristina Keneally, to reduce the target area by expanding the portion of the site protected by a regional park zoning. "We are saying here's your chance to protect another 100 hectares of land," Mr Brown said.

Ms Keneally said the Government increased the protected area by 270 hectares in 2006 but she would consider expanding it further. **Sunanda Creagh Urban Affairs Reporter 8/12/2008 Forwarded by Geoff Brown Save the ADI site**

We raised the clearing of CPW at the ADI Site as an example of the impact of urban development and poor planning. We have called on the NSW Gov to protect a further 100 ha of CPW within the Western Precinct . The SMH got a comment from Planning Minister Kristina Keneally and she said she was considering protecting more CPW at the ADI Site. **Geoff Brown**  
[cwmalis@bigpond.com](mailto:cwmalis@bigpond.com)  
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/housing-puts-woodland-in-danger-scientists/2008/12/07/1228584656062.html>

## GOLDEN-HEADED POISON FROG



**C**olumbia is home to more threatened amphibian species than any other country. In a bid to protect some of them, such as *Ranitomeya tolimense* - the golden-headed poison frog - conservation groups have just bought a plot of undisturbed forest and created the Ranita Dorada Amphibian Reserve. **Forwarded by Andrew Nelson**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/2/shared/spl/hi/pop\\_ups/08/sci\\_nat\\_enl\\_1230036684/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/08/sci_nat_enl_1230036684/html/1.stm)

## CAMBODIAN TREE FROG *CHIROMANTIS SAMKOSENSIS*



## GREATER MEKONG'S SPECIES SPECTACLE

**T**ree frog *Chiromantis samkosensis*, found in Cambodia, has a number of unique characteristics that distinguishes from other Asian *Chiromantis* species, including green blood and turquoise bones. [http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/2/hi/in\\_pictures/7780514.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/2/hi/in_pictures/7780514.stm)  
Forwarded to Frogcall by Andrew Nelson

**Northern Banjo Frog, *Limnodynastes terrareginae*.**  
Photo Lothar Voigt



# WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2008



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nature culture discover



*Litoria chloris* Red eyed tree frog Photo George Madani



David Nelson Blue Mountains tree frog, *Litoria citropa*

*Notaden menaloscaphus*



Calling Northern spadefoot toad Photo by David Nelson

**A RARE TYPE OF FROG HAS BEEN FILMED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY SCIENTISTS.**

**T**he purple frog was only discovered in 2003 in the Western Ghats, in India. The chubby amphibian spends most of its time buried underground, surfacing only to breed during the monsoon. Video courtesy of S. D. Biju and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7814913.stm>

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**HERPDIGEST**

**FROGS PIPE UP AFTER AUSTRALIAN DESERT DOWNPOUR.**

**M**orning Edition visits an ephemeral pond in the Australian desert, where a sudden downpour has flushed out 11 species of frogs. In their chorus, they signal to mates and mark territory. The segment is part of "Sounds Wild," a series of short, sound-rich stories from remote parts of the planet that are home to rare animals. by David Stewart, NPR, Morning Edition 9/1/09  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99108782&ft=1&f=1004>



*Litoria nannotis* Waterfall frog Photo George Madani

**FROGWATCH HELPLINE 0419 249 728**

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