

FROG CALL

NEWSLETTER No. 102
August 2009

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Photo by Marion Anstis *Litoria staccato* Chattering Rock Frog.
Tadpole expert and FATS member, Marion Anstis and Museum herpetologist Paul Doughty discovered *Lt. staccato* near the Grotto, a spectacular waterhole near the Kimberley town of Wyndham. See page 5



FATS AGM STARTS 7PM FOLLOWED BY OUR USUAL MEETING

MEETING FORMAT for 7th August 2009

- 6.30 pm Lost frogs needing homes. Please bring your FATS membership card, donation and amphibian licence.
- 7.00 pm Welcome, AGM and announcements.
- 7.45 pm The main speaker is Michelle Stockwell from University of Newcastle "Green & Golden Bell Frog Monitoring at Sydney Olympic Parklands"
Field trip reports and five favourite slides. Tell us about your recent frogging trips or experiences. If you have slides or other images, bring them along as well.
- 9.30 pm Evenings end with our regular guessing competition, light refreshments and pleasant conversation.

Join us at our AGM and ordinary meeting. Arrive 6.30pm for a 7pm start

Friday 7th August 2009

Park at the first security gate on the right hand side of Jamieson St. (about 300m off Holker St), Follow the signs to Building 22 Homebush Bay, Sydney Olympic Park Accessible by bus or train. Call us for details See map page7



CONTENTS

Main speaker last meeting	
Rodney Parker-Wright	p2
AGM notice	p2
Our first camping tour	p2
Falls Forest Retreat	p3
Media clippings	p4
Photos from George Madani	p4
Marion Anstis <i>Litoria staccato</i>	p5
Frog hotel	p6
Ku-ring-gai wildflower festival	p7
Map to FATS meeting	p7
A billion frogs on worlds' plates	p8
Prince Charles and the frog	p8
Mountain chicken	p9
HerpDigest	p9
Cranebrook saved	p10
6 day coach tour	p11
Elephant dung	p11
Field trips and FATS contacts	p12



Green and Golden Bell Frog documented on Ash Island in 1997



The area of Typha where GGBF were recorded in 1997.



Consultants and special interest groups discuss GGBF



This more brackish area was also identified as GGBF habitat in 1999.

See website <http://www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/kooragang/GreenandGoldenBellFrogs.htm> (above)

LAST MEETING 5 JUNE 2009

Our main speaker last meeting was **Rodney Parker-Wright, from the Society for Frogs and Reptiles (SOFAR) and the Hunter River Landcare Network. He gave a very insightful presentation about the plight of *Litoria aurea* the Green and Golden Bell Frog (GGBF), once so common and widespread in the Hunter Region.**

Climate conditions fluctuate in the Hunter from drought to tropical conditions and remnant populations are under new threats. Some challenges currently faced by remnant populations of amphibians include an estimation that 85% of ponds used by GGBF are infested with Mosquito Fish, *Gambusia holbrooki*. Rodney had excellent slides showing aerial shots, statistical analysis, maps and topography. Much of the area had been heavily timbered, with lots of ephemeral ponds and small dams. These are now being cleared and drained for building development. Many endangered ecological communities may be affected by the loss of remnant habitat.

There are some property owners who have taken an interest in the plight of the frogs and manage their properties with care.

The widespread declines need to be monitored with further field surveys to obtain a true picture of the fragmented remnant populations and to have plans of management to protect them. There is concern that insufficient efforts are being made to carry out target surveys, rehabilitate sites and put in place a recovery plan for the Hunter Region frogs.

Whilst residential development is expanding nearby, land management techniques for some historic sites appear to have been overlooked. Council seem to be unaware or disinterested in these sites which seem to be used as dumping areas.

The largest remnant population of GGBFs is at Kooragang Island.

It is ironic that the new mining activities, with their updated land management techniques, may not have as much impact on frog habitats that the new residential development activities appear to have.

It is obvious that the frog populations are disappearing. The big debate is how do we assist the GGBFs? Do we just hope that the two or three pockets survive or do we create more potential frog colony sites?

Our next speakers, Grant Webster and Aaron Payne discussed their 2009 Victorian frogging expedition. As expected, fewer frogs were located in this southern part of Australia.

Limnodynastes interioris, The Burrowing Frog, a juvenile *Litoria peronii*, Perons Tree Frog, a *Crinia parinsignifera* tadpole and *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* tadpoles were sighted at the Temora wetlands. At Seymour, (the site of the biggest release of *Gambusia* in WWII), Eastern Froglets were heard calling. At Yea, *Limnodynastes dumerilii*, The Banjo Frog was seen and *Geocrinia victoriana* were calling in huge numbers. It was very dry at Halls Gap, in the Grampians, where *Geocrinia laevis* and *Crinia signifera* were sighted as well as the commonly seen *Litoria ewingi*. The trip continued through Melbourne, Rosedale and Tumut, where more frogs were encountered including several *Pseudophryne* species. Many interesting and great slides – as usual. Thanks Grant and Aaron. As part of his presentation, Peter Spradbrow invited FATS members to Featherdale at Blacktown. He spoke about the diverse numbers of animals there. See p12. MW

FATS AGM NEXT MEETING 7 / 8 / 2009

It is time to consider joining our FATS committee. **Don't be shy. No experience required!** Feel free to contact any of the current committee members (see page 12) to discuss being nominated and what would be required of you. What about an assistant role? We look forward to your fresh ideas and strategies. MW

OUR FIRST COACH - CAMPING TOUR UPDATE.

Our coach tour is filling up fast! There are only a few seats left on this tour. The Committee has been somewhat overwhelmed by the fantastic response from FATS members. Our hope was that this would be a FATS tour primarily for members. We were however prepared to advertise to the general public to make up the numbers. It is now very apparent that this additional advertising will not be necessary. For those contemplating joining the tour, please book very soon, it is close to being fully booked. The Committee would like to thank members for their wonderful support for this new initiative. It is this support that makes FATS such a great organisation. If you have any questions regarding the tour, please ring me. See page 11. **Robert Wall**



She became the BMR's first, and at that time only, palaeobotanist. All the plant fossils collected by the BMR's field geologists passed through her hands.

At the end of her career at the BMR she embarked on a second career as a writer, drawing on her vast knowledge of the palaeobotany of Gondwana, and the book "The Greening of Gondwana" was published in 1986. It is a magnificent description, illustrated by fantastic plant fossil photographs by Jim Frazier, of the evolution of plants and their relationship to Gondwana and its subsequent fragments. The list of acknowledgements in the book is a veritable who's who of Australian geology, reflecting the breadth of expertise Mary was able to call upon in preparing the different aspects of the book. She has since authored several books on palaeobotany and conservation topics.

In the last few years her interest in conservation prompted her to sell her home in Sydney and purchase a parcel of land on the boundary on Yoorigan National Park, about 4 hours drive north of Sydney. This she runs as a retreat, where small groups can commune with nature in and around the conference centre. This was the venue for a group of FATS members for three days in February this year.

Besides the walks to the waterfall and cascades, members conducted fauna surveys to identify the local wildlife.

THE FALLS FOREST RETREAT EXCURSION

The purpose of the Falls Forest excursion in February this year was threefold:

- **Enjoy the rural /forest setting of the retreat**
- **Meet Dr Mary White, AM**
- **Perform a fauna survey**

Dr Mary White is an extraordinary national figure in a number of ways. Born in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), she gained her doctorate in geology in South Africa in the middle of the last century. She was encouraged to study palaeobotany by Professor Alex du Toit, a champion of the theory of continental drift (plate tectonics), well before it was generally accepted. Her husband accepted a position with the Australian Bureau of Mineral Resources (BMR) in Canberra in 1955.

During their 3 days stay in Perth, en route to Canberra, she immediately recognised the similarities of the local flora to that which she knew from Africa, a legacy of the continents' shared history as part of the Gondwana landmass.



Bordering on the national park, a rich variety of mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs were identified – too numerous to list here. Highlight for FATS members was the discovery of endangered species *Mixophyes iterates* (Great Barred Frog). Another highlight of the trip was hearing Mary herself, in the sunken pit of the conference centre, tell of the key influences and achievements of her life and her thoughts on climate change.

Since our visit Mary has been named a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia for service to botany as a researcher and through the promotion of increased understanding and awareness of the natural world. **Readers can learn more of the retreat through its website:**

<http://www.fallsretreat.com.au> **Andrew Nelson**

Frog-friend girls earn their stripes

LAURA Searson and Emily Waterson are more than friends – they're Frog Pond Friends.

The year 6 pupils at Lane Cove Public School are in charge of looking after the new frog pond which has become an outdoor classroom.

Parents spent weeks mixing cement, carting rocks and mulch, planting and raking to encourage wildlife.

It was sponsored by Willoughby Council and local community groups.

The parents also installed a solar-powered pump to move the water around so mosquitoes are not encouraged to lay eggs.

Eleven-year-olds Laura and Emily said they had grown to love frogs because they had backyard creeks at home.

The girls have seen one frog, believed to be a striped marsh frog – from introduced tadpoles.

"We really like having a frog pond at school because there is so much to do," Emily said.

Laura said their roles included weeding and maintaining the pond as well as monitoring younger pupils who wanted to look at the frogs.

"We're training other kids who want to become a Frog Pond Friend when we leave so they're called our Tadpole Trainers."



CROAK: Laura Searson and Emily Waterson.

Picture: SARA NIXON -PP257766

North Shore Times 24 March 2009 Sent to FATS by Jono Herrman



Photo George Madani *Neobatrachus*

Photo George Madani
Nyngan *Crinia parainsignifera*
Eastern Sign-bearing Frog



George Madani *Austrochaperina gracilipes*
Shrill Whistling Frog

A NEW SPECIES OF ROCK FROG FROM THE KIMBERLEYS, WA.

In January 2006, I was lucky enough to join in with the WA Museum on some field work in the Kimberleys of northwestern WA. Our aim was to survey for existing frog species and any possible new species. It wasn't long before a wander up in a steep narrow rocky gorge produced some unexpected results...

Within this gorge, trickling down amongst rock platforms and large boulders was a small creek-line, which when the wet really got into full swing, would become a raging torrent. We were there a week before the heavy rain fell, and the frogs must have known they had to get busy before the shallow rock pools favoured for breeding turned into large fast-flowing waterways which would have washed all trace of their eggs away.

Paul Doughty and Jen Francis had heard a frog calling in a neighbouring gorge the previous night and when they played me the recording, I was convinced it was a call unknown to me, so our task was to find more frogs (and for me, some tadpoles) of what we suspected was a new species, similar in most respects to Copland's Rock frog *Litoria coplandi* - a common frog across the Top End in rocky escarpments.

Soon we were in luck and heard a few hesitant calls starting up, which once they got going, definitely sounded distinct, although with some similarities, to the call of *L. coplandi*. Excitement in the camp when we found two males and a gravid female sitting on large rocks near the creek pools, and I even got lucky and found some embryos ready to hatch which I hoped might be those of the new species.

After more examination of the adults compared to *L. coplandi*, it became clear that there were slight differences in the webbing of the hind feet, and our new frog had a lateral head stripe not known to occur in *L. coplandi*. After raising the embryos, I felt even more convinced we had a different species when I discovered subtle differences in the body shape and mouthparts between these tadpoles and those of *L. coplandi* (and also another related frog in the area *Litoria watjulumensis*) which enabled me to confirm the tadpoles were of use in identifying these three species.



Jen Francis

We went ahead and published a description of the new species in 2007 under the name of the Chattering Rock Frog (*Litoria staccato*), naming it after its call, which was a rapid series of high-pitched 'staccato' (short) notes creating a rather 'chattering' sound which can sound like Morse code.

The only two females we found were reddish brown, as shown in the photo on the cover of this FrogCall. Below is another male *L. staccato*. Note the different colour. They are a variable frog, and this is what they can look like by day. The photo on the left shows a male at night.

In subsequent years of survey work in the Kimberleys, we also discovered a new species of *Crinia* (*Crinia fimbriata*), the description of which was published just this year. More news about that one next time. **Marion Anstis**



Marion Anstis



Photo by Miguel Diaz

FROGS' HOTEL OPENS – BUT WHERE'S THE BELLHOP?

Scotland's First Hotel For Frogs Has Been Built, To Help Stop The Amphibians Croaking As Predators Strike. Frogs are particularly vulnerable at this time of year, when they gather at ponds to mate. So volunteers at Redhall Walled Garden in Edinburgh have built a special shelter for the creatures, where they can hide from attack from birds and other predators.

Its doors opened yesterday at the launch of a national campaign encouraging hundreds of community groups to come up with similar ways to help their local environment.

As well as frog hotels, it is expected groups will come up with ideas for "bat boudoirs" using bat boxes, plus bee havens, butterfly gardens and other imaginative ways to help wildlife in their local area.

The Action Earth campaign was launched by Community Service Volunteers (CSV) yesterday at the walled garden in Edinburgh - which is a facility for people recovering from mental health problems.

Frogs are encouraged to hop through a drain pipe into the three-storey hotel, made from bits of wood from the nearby area.

An underground vault has been lined with rotting wood, to turn it into what the volunteers are calling a "compost café", where bugs gather and can be munched on by the frogs. It is hoped they will then climb a ramp inside the hotel to make use of a drier upper tier where they can relax in peace, away from predators. The slate roof on the structure, which looks similar to a beehive and can house about 20 frogs, is removable, to let visitors to the garden have a peek at the amphibian hotel guests.

Robert Henderson, Scottish co-ordinator of the CSV campaign, said: "It's an amusing way of presenting something that is really fairly serious. "It's to provide protection for the frogs that congregate around the pond when they come out of hibernation for the mating season." He added: "We are trying to encourage people to look at ways of helping their own biodiversity."

Mr Henderson highlighted that frogs have suffered habitat loss, particularly as home owners have landscaped their gardens to tidy up and remove areas of rotting vegetation favoured by the amphibians. He added: "Frogs are very good for gardens because they eat things that are less beneficial, like slugs." He encouraged other people to try building frog hotels, but warned that the amphibians should never be introduced into an area.

It is illegal to remove them from one habitat and release them in another.

The shelters should be built in order to attract frogs to an area, or to protect those that are there, Mr Henderson said.

CSV has teamed up with Morrisons supermarket for the campaign. The supermarket will be giving 900 cash grants of £50 to local projects to help the environment - 200 will be given to groups in Scotland.

In addition, Scottish Natural Heritage will be doling out 75 grants of £250.

The hope is that the campaign, which runs until 31 July, will get thousands of volunteers across the country taking action to protect the environment.

Mike Williams, of CSV, said: "Our Action Earth campaign is all about getting communities engaged in making Britain green. It's the small changes that involve volunteers which can make a real difference and make a huge contribution to building strong communities."

In 2008 more than 18,000 volunteers took part in Action Earth. Projects included planting and recycling trees, clearing silt and rubbish from waterways, replanting hedgerows, orchard planting, path laying, making bird tables and nesting boxes, coppicing, and creating outdoor learning environments.

Keith Lightbody from Morrisons said: "Morrisons is keen to support projects like Redhall Walled Garden in protecting their environment today for the benefit of tomorrow. "When you get the whole community working towards the same goal, you can really make a difference."

4/3/09, By Jenny Haworth, News.Scotsman.com - HerpDigest.org: V9 Issue 11 Publisher/Editor- Allen Salzberg HerpDigest Inc. is non-profit, www.herpdigest.org



Photo George Madani *Mixophyes balbus* - Stuttering Frog



Photo by George Madani
Northern Spadefoot Toad *Notaden melanoscaphus*



Photo by George Madani *Notaden bennetti*
Holy Cross Frog at Nyngan

FATS will be at the Ku-ring-gai Festival of Wildflowers on Sunday 30th August 9am to 4pm, with a frog and information display and dip-netting activities at the pond.

There are many activities for children, bushwalks for families, wildflower displays and lots of plants for sale. Taronga Zoo and the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society will be presenting talks and displays. Walks and talks on photography, bush tucker and bush poetry also feature this year. See:

<http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/www/html/536-festival-of-wildflowers.asp> for the full description from Ku-ring-gai Council. Wendy Grimm



KU-RING-GAI FESTIVAL OF WILDFLOWERS
Punia Jeffery front left and Marion Anstis front right.

DIRECTIONS TO FATS MEETING: Enter Jamieson Street from Holker Street, Homebush Bay, Sydney Olympic Park. The entry to Jamieson St is adjacent to Silverwater Goal and easy to miss. Park car at "P" sign (see below) near security gates (left hand side of Jamieson St and about 300 metres from Holker St). Walk into security area and follow the signs (about 250 metres) to building 22.

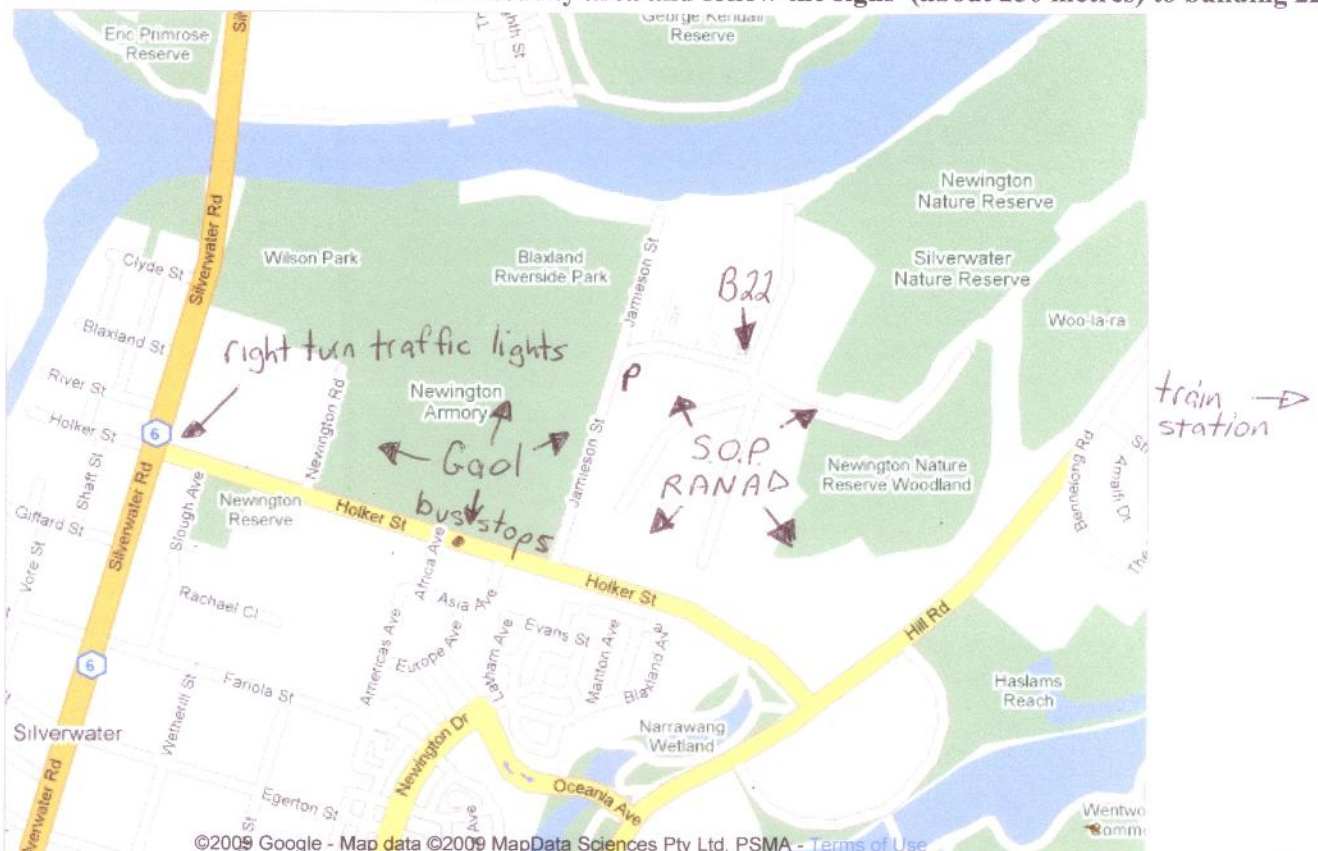




Photo by Virginia, Davistown NSW

A BILLION FROGS ON WORLD'S PLATES

Up to one billion frogs are taken from the wild for human consumption each year, according to a new study. Researchers arrived at this conclusion by analysing UN trade data, although they acknowledge there is a lot of uncertainty in the figure. France and the US are the two biggest importers, with significant consumption in several East Asian nations.

About one-third of all amphibians are listed as threatened species, with habitat loss the biggest factor. But hunting is acknowledged as another important driver for some species, along with climate change, pollution and disease - notably the fungal condition chytridiomycosis which has brought rapid extinctions to some amphibians. The new research, to be published in a forthcoming edition of the journal *Conservation Biology*, suggests that the global trade in wild frogs has been underestimated in the past. "Frogs legs are on the menu at school cafeterias in Europe, market stalls and dinner tables across Asia to high end restaurants throughout the world," said Corey Bradshaw from Adelaide University in Australia. "Amphibians are already the most threatened animal group yet assessed because of disease, habitat loss and climate change - man's massive appetite for their legs is not helping. "Amphibians are farmed for food in some countries but these animals are not included in the new analysis.

Exporting extinction Indonesia emerged from Professor Bradshaw's analysis as both the largest exporter of frogs - 5,000 tonnes per year - and a major consumer. This has raised concerns that it may soon experience the declines induced by hunting that have been seen elsewhere in the world, notably in France and the US, where species such as the Californian red-legged frog have crashed.

The researchers suggest that the amphibian trade may mimic the situation with global fisheries. "Harvesting seems to be following the same pattern for frogs as with marine fisheries - initial local collapses in Europe and North America, followed by population declines in India and Bangladesh and now potentially in Indonesia," said Professor Bradshaw. "Absence of essential data to monitor and manage the wild harvest is a large concern." The researchers suggest establishing a certification scheme so exporters would have to prove that their animals had been hunted sustainably. However, a large portion of the trade in amphibians for the pet trade is conducted illegally, and experts say customs officials in many countries are ill-equipped to spot and deal with illegal consignments.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/2/hi/science/nature/7845306.stm> Sent to FrogCall by Andrew Nelson

BACK ISSUES OF FROGCALL AVAILABLE

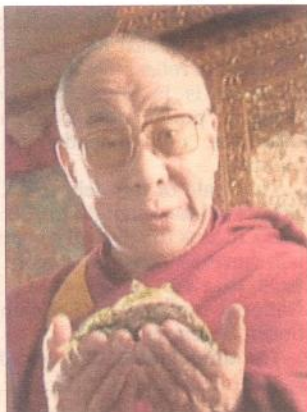
If you would like to order back copies of FrogCall,

please contact the editor **Monica Wangmann** for a quote. Costs will include postage and administration, for this fundraising initiative.

See page 12 for contact details.

FROG AND THE PRINCES IN VIDEO PLEA TO SAVE THE RAINFORESTS

The Weekly Telegraph 20/5/09 www.telegraph.co.uk/expat Sent to FrogCall by Barbara Harvey



On board: the Dalai Lama

By Andrew Pierce

THE Prince of Wales has recruited his sons William and Harry to his international campaign to stop the destruction of the rainforests.

In a 90-second film released last week on MySpace, the

social networking site, the young Princes said they were "trying to save the environment for all of us". The brothers recruited Daniel Craig, whom they met at a James Bond premiere, to appear in the film alongside the actors Robin Williams, who signed up at the Prince of Wales's 60th birthday concert last year, and Harrison Ford, who campaigns for the environment. The Dalai Lama introduces himself as a "simple Buddhist monk".

But the biggest star of the film, shown at the National Geographic Store in central London, was a digitally created frog who appeared alongside all three Princes.

The frog was created by Framestore, the Oscar-winning company behind the film *The Golden Compass*.

"Princes and frogs have a long association but our frog is symbolic with the world's rain-

forests," the Prince of Wales said in the film.

"The frog is a symbol of action against climate change. Our aim is to build an online community to call for urgent action to protect the rainforests, without which we will most certainly lose the battle against catastrophic climate change."

The video marked the start of an online campaign by the

Prince's Rainforests Project - www.rainforestsSOS.org - to sign up people across the world to demand an end to tropical deforestation.



A digital frog appears with the Prince in his rainforest campaign

FUNGUS DEVASTATES 'CHICKEN' FROG



Dead mountain chicken now litter the streams of Montserrat

Montserrat's "mountain chicken" frog has become the latest victim of the killer fungal disease that is devastating amphibians worldwide. UK researchers say that only two small pockets of the animals on the tiny Caribbean island remain disease-free. The mountain chicken *Leptodactylus fallax* is one of the world's largest frogs, and appears on the coat of arms of neighbouring Dominica.

Conservationists plan to take surviving frogs into captive breeding programmes. They suspect the chytrid fungus entered Montserrat on small frogs stowing away in consignments of produce from Dominica. If this was killing mammals or birds in the same way it's killing amphibians, millions and millions would have been spent on it. We've always been afraid that frogs coming in banana consignments from Dominica would bring chytrid and that it would then spread into the centre of the island," said John Fa, director of conservation science at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.

"The northern populations are closer to the port, and the disease appears to have spread southward along the river systems. Essentially, all populations to the north and north-west of the centre hills have been decimated, and there are just two remaining populations of seemingly healthy animals in the south-eastern corner." An expedition in 2005 found no sign of fungal infection.

Clean sweep: The frogs are so called because their meat tastes like chicken. In both Caribbean islands - the only places where they naturally occur now - hunting was already impacting populations before the arrival of chytrid. Most of the Montserrat populations were also affected by the volcanic eruptions that began in 1995, although the creation of an "exclusion zone" around the volcano's slopes has provided some help to wildlife by freeing it from human pressures.

Events on Montserrat now appear to be mimicking what happened on Dominica in 2002. Within 15 months of the fungus arriving, about 80% of the island's mountain chicken had been wiped out. First identified just over a decade ago, the fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* has spread through hundreds of amphibian species on different continents.

It sweeps some to extinction in a matter of months, while others are apparently immune. "We still don't know how chytrid kills frogs, and there's some very basic stuff about the biology of the fungus that we need to understand," observed Dr Andrew Cunningham from the Zoological Society of London. "We've known about it for 10 years, but so little money has been spent on it. If this was killing mammals or

birds in the same way it's killing amphibians, millions and millions would have been spent on it." In captivity, chemicals can be used to rid amphibians of the fungus, but as yet there is no way to cure them in the wild, or to cleanse infected water bodies. As a result, many conservation groups are focusing their energies on establishing captive populations.



Giant of the forest

Durrell and other conservation organisations already have mountain chicken in captivity, and will be taking more from the apparently healthy Montserrat populations in the coming weeks.

In contrast to some other operations, though, it plans to treat and return some frogs to the wild within a couple of years, placing them in areas that appear to be free of chytrid. **Richard Black Environment correspondent** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7948124.stm>
Sent to Frogcall by Andrew Nelson

DOCUMENTARY, FROGS: THE THIN GREEN LINE

Visit <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/frogs-the-thin-green-line/introduction/4763/> to see the preview and for additional information. (HerpDigest April 2009) <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/frogs-the-thin-green-line/video-behind-the-scenes/4841/>

HERPDIGEST MAY 2009

One fifth of Europe's reptiles and nearly a quarter of its amphibians are threatened, according to new studies carried out by IUCN for the European Commission. The studies, released on International Biodiversity Day, are the first European Red Lists for amphibians and reptiles, and reveal alarming population trends. More than half of all European amphibians (59 percent) and 42 percent of reptiles are in decline, which means that amphibians and reptiles are even more at risk than European mammals and birds.

For 23 percent of amphibians and 21 percent of reptiles the situation is so severe that they are classified as threatened in the European Red List. Most of the pressure on these declining species comes from mankind's destruction of their natural habitats, combined with climate change, pollution and the presence of invasive species.

6-DAY COACH-CAMPING TOUR

“Frogs and Reptiles of the Northern NSW Rainforests”

February 12-17, 2010.

The Frog and Tadpole Study Group, in conjunction with Outback Track Tours, will host a six-day herpetological tour of the Dorrigo and Washpool rainforests of northern NSW. We will explore the unique wildlife and dark luxuriance of these spectacular World Heritage Listed rainforests. Our itinerary remains flexible to ensure that, each day, we are able to take advantage of optimum local conditions. Returning towards Sydney, we will spend a day taking in the grandeur of Barrington Tops, camping overnight. We will survey the local area for frogs and reptiles.

We will enjoy camping to the sights and sounds of pristine mountain streams set amongst towering forests. This is a wonderful opportunity to see some of our most inspiring frogs and reptiles in their natural habitat. Most members would rarely experience this fauna in the wild.

The tour will be led by Dr. Arthur White. Arthur carries out much professional fieldwork and his research is widely published in scientific journals. He lectures extensively on many scientific matters, and of course, speaks regularly on various frog matters at meetings. This tour is open to all interested herpetologists (i.e. FATS membership is not a requirement).

The tour will commence and finish at Eddy Avenue at Central Station. The fare of \$800-00 includes travel by air-conditioned 4WD coach, camp and park entry fees, driver, professional cook and meals. Some assistance with setting-up of tents, after-meal wash-up and general duties will be appreciated. Bookings can only be confirmed with the payment of \$250.00 deposit to Outback Track Tours.

This tour will eventually be advertised to the general public, members are advised to book early to ensure a place on the tour. See page two.

For further enquiries and detailed itinerary, phone Robert Wall of the FATS Group on 9681-5308 or Mark and Sarah Wardrop of Outback Track Tours on 9913-1484 or STD on 1300-884-463.

*Please Note : This is a commercial tour and business arrangement with Outback Track Tours. All planned activities at Dorrigo and Washpool are restricted to TOUR PARTICIPANTS ONLY. Club members **will not** be permitted to 'link-up' with the tour group at Dorrigo, Washpool or Barrington in order to attend herpetological activities. Your courtesy will be appreciated.*



George Madani *Austrochaperina fryi* Daintree Whistling Frog

FROGS SPECIES DISCOVERED IN ELEPHANT DUNG

Three different species of frogs have been discovered living in the dung of the Asian elephant in southeastern Sri Lanka. The discovery—the first time anyone has recorded frogs living in elephant droppings—has widespread conservation implications both for frogs and Asian elephants, which are in decline.

Campos-Arceiz examined 290 elephant dung piles and found six frog individuals in five dung piles, representing three species: the ornate narrow-mouthed frog *Microhyla ornata*, another narrow-mouthed species *Microhyla rubra*, and a frog species in the *Sphaerotheca* genus. While Campos-Arceiz is uncertain why the frogs were residing in the elephant dung, he speculates that "elephant dung provides a good shelter. I found the frogs in an arid area during the dry season. Under such conditions and in the absence of litter, elephant dung is probably a good alternative to spend the day in. Elephants digest food very poorly. Their faeces contain a large proportion of undigested material and are highly fibrous. When fresh, elephant dung is humid and probably cooler than the environment during the day. Moreover, frogs could eat some of the many invertebrates present in elephant dung."

As Campos-Arceiz alludes to, he found more than just frogs taking refuge in the elephant droppings. Although frogs were the only vertebrates, he also found beetles, ants, centipedes, millipedes, scorpions, crickets, spiders, and termites, "suggesting that a dung pile can become a small ecosystem on its own," Campos-Arceiz writes in the paper announcing his discoveries in *Biotropica*. With the dung piles becoming like island ecosystems, it was apparent that these discoveries held import for biodiversity. SNIP "If we loose elephants from one particular site, all the biological interactions and ecosystem processes in which they are involved are lost as well," Campos-Arceiz notes. SNIP Campos-Arceiz views elephant dung as a rich ecosystem with many mysteries. He plans to continue studying the species living in elephant dung as well as its vital role as a seed-disperser. **EXTRACTS from, Herpdigest article, By Jeremy Hance, mongabay.com 10 June 2009 photos go to http://news.mongabay.com/2009/0610-hance_elephantdung.html**

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 and 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.

19 September 9 a.m.

Featherdale Wildlife Park.

Leader : Peter Spradbrow.

Meet at the ticket box entrance at Featherdale. 217 Kildare Rd, Doonside.

Public and private zoos can perform a vital role in species recovery programs. They may undertake captive breeding programs to provide stock for release into the wild or provide 'insurance' populations for vulnerable species. Some zoos help develop 'breeding protocols' (the best practice in which to breed up a species) or may carry out 'ex situ' research (i.e. studying an animal away from its natural habitat). Featherdale has earned a reputation for its innovative breeding successes. Today, we will take a look behind the scenes. Peter is the Education Officer at this complex and today will show us what is involved in maintaining and managing animals in a facility like Featherdale. He will pass on some of his extraordinary knowledge of herpetology and animal husbandry.

Note: Discounted admission price is: Adult - \$15.60, Child - \$10.60.

17 October 7 p.m.

The Watagans.

Leader : Steve Weir.

Take the F3 north. Travel approx 83km and take the Morisset/Cooranbong exit. Turn right and drive 2km to the cnr. of Mandalong Rd and Freemans Dr.

In S-E Australia, most streams have their source in the higher elevations in the ranges. Historically, this was also the preferred location for the forestry industry*. A combination of steep slopes and high rainfall, coupled with potentially careless logging practices and logging road construction can create erosion and turbidity ('*ter-bid-it-tee*' - *the amount of suspended sediment in water, 'muddiness'*). This can affect vast tracts of downstream habitat and can affect frogs many kilometers away. Tonight we will consider the disparate influences of logging, rainfall, terrain, waterflows and their combined effect upon our froglife. Steve is a former Field Trips Co-ordinator and many members will be familiar with his outstanding and intuitive grasp of frogs, reptiles and ecology. * *Forestry operations developed here because much of the forests on the flat, more productive coastal strip had already been cleared for the pastoral and agricultural industry.*

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 and by attending agree to; a release of all claims, a waiver of liability and an assumption of risk.

FROGWATCH HELPLINE

0419 249 728

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