

# FROG CALL



THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP NSW Inc.

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NEWSLETTER No. 168 AUGUST 2020

From the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, Facebook page. Creative use of limited space. Narrow frog pond built by Anthony Bigelow and son.



*You are invited to  
our AGM & FATS meeting.*

*It's free.*

*Everyone is welcome.*

Arrive from 6.30 pm for a 7pm start.

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

**FATS meets at the Education Centre,  
Bicentennial Pk, Sydney Olympic Park**

Easy walk from Concord West Railway  
Station and straight down Victoria Ave.

Take a torch in winter.

By car: Enter from Australia Ave at the  
Bicentennial Park main entrance,  
turn off to the right and  
drive through the park. It's a one way road.  
Turn right into P10f car park.

Or enter from Bennelong Rd/Parkway. It's  
a short stretch of two way road. Turn left.

Park in P10f car park, the last car park  
before the Bennelong Rd. exit gate.

## **FATS AGM AND ORDINARY MEETING**

**7PM FRIDAY 7 AUGUST 2020**

**The Education Centre can hold a maximum of 25 people,  
spaced out ( COVID19 requirements ). To ensure no more  
than 25 people attend, please contact our President Arthur  
White by email (see P12) to confirm your attendance.**

- 6.30 pm** Lost Green Tree Frogs seeking forever homes: Please bring your membership card and cash \$50 donation. Sorry, we don't have EFTPOS. Your NSW NPWS amphibian licence must be sighted on the night. Adopted frogs can never be released. Contact us before the night and FATS will confirm what frogs are ready to rehome.
- 7.00 pm** Welcome, Annual General Meeting and announcements
- 8.00 pm** Trivia quiz
- 9.30 pm** Show us your frog images. Tell us about your frogging trips or experiences. Guessing competition, frog adoptions continue, supper, relax and chat with frog friends and experts.

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## FATS AGM 7PM FRIDAY 7 AUGUST 2020

**T**he FATS AGM will be held on Friday 7/8/2020, commencing 7pm. FATS meets at the Education Centre, Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park. Due to COVID19 restrictions, a maximum of 25 people can attend the venue. Please email Arthur White (see page 12) and advise how many people would like to attend. Include your names and contact numbers.

If you would like to ask any questions about joining the FATS committee or about any items of general business you wish to raise, please contact Arthur by 5pm Thursday 6/8.

We appreciate fresh ideas and new members on our committee. No experience required. The committee meets 6 times a year. No task commitments or time expected of committee members, other than what you are able to spare. See contacts details on page 12. **Arthur White**



Whistling Tree Frog *Litoria verreauxii* by Jodi Rowley

### FROG OF THE MONTH

**T**he frog of the month for June was chosen by Jodi Rowley. The Whistling Tree Frog has a peak calling period of March through to July. We are currently receiving regular records of this species throughout its range, despite the drop in temperature much of the east coast is currently experiencing. We love hearing recordings of species that call in the cooler weather, so grab your phone, jacket and a hot drink, and let us know what you hear!

**Description:** A medium-sized species of frog reaching up to 3.5 cm in body length. It has a dark brown, light brown, or green back with two wide, brown, longitudinal stripes along the middle, starting between the eyes. There are sometimes dark brown patches on the side. There is a dark brown stripe from the tip of the snout to the arm, and a cream-coloured patch underneath the eye. The belly is white. The pupil is horizontal and the iris is gold. The front and back of the thighs are orange, and the groin is yellow with black spots. Fingers are unwebbed and toes are half-webbed, both with small discs.

Learn more about all frog species at [frogid.net.au/learn](http://frogid.net.au/learn).

#### The sky is the limit for the FrogID family!

When FrogID launched in November 2017, for the team involved it was hard to imagine what would follow. There were many unknowns, and whether Australians were up for the challenge of helping our scientists to protect and conserve our frogs was yet to be seen.

Fast forward to June 2020 and we are overwhelmed with the continued support, through drought, bushfires and now a global pandemic – the commitment of the FrogID community has not faltered. Since July 2019, we have averaged more than 100 calls submitted per day, and as our web counter shows below, we are inching ever so closely to 200,000 verified frog records.

Species found 197

Calls submitted 124,908

## 2020 FATS FROG-O-GRAPHIC COMPETITION

**T**he FATS members' 2020 Frog-O-Graphic competition closes on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

**Categories:** Best Frog Image, Best Pet Frog Image, Most Interesting Image and People's Choice.

**Category** winners are decided by a panel of judges.

**People's Choice** is voted for by everyone present at the October FATS meeting. Alternate arrangements will be made if we can't meet in October.

All entries are by email to [photos@fats.org.au](mailto:photos@fats.org.au)

Please state:

- \* your name,
- \* confirm that you are a financial FATS member,
- \* **identify the frog species preferably by scientific name (in the file name) and location**, if known,
- \* whether the image is a pet frog
- \* and your contact phone number.

Max 6 entries per person.

Max attachment size 6 MB.

Fabulous prizes awarded.

Entries must be original and your own work. They don't have to be recent images.

The entries may appear in FrogCall, FATS Facebook, our web site and other FATS publications. **Arthur White**



Calls verified 191,655

With the winter solstice now behind us, we are looking forward to warmer weather, and we always get excited as spring approaches and the number of species of frogs heard calling increases dramatically across much of the country. But for now, those winter calling species are just as important to our understanding of how frogs are reacting to a changing environment.

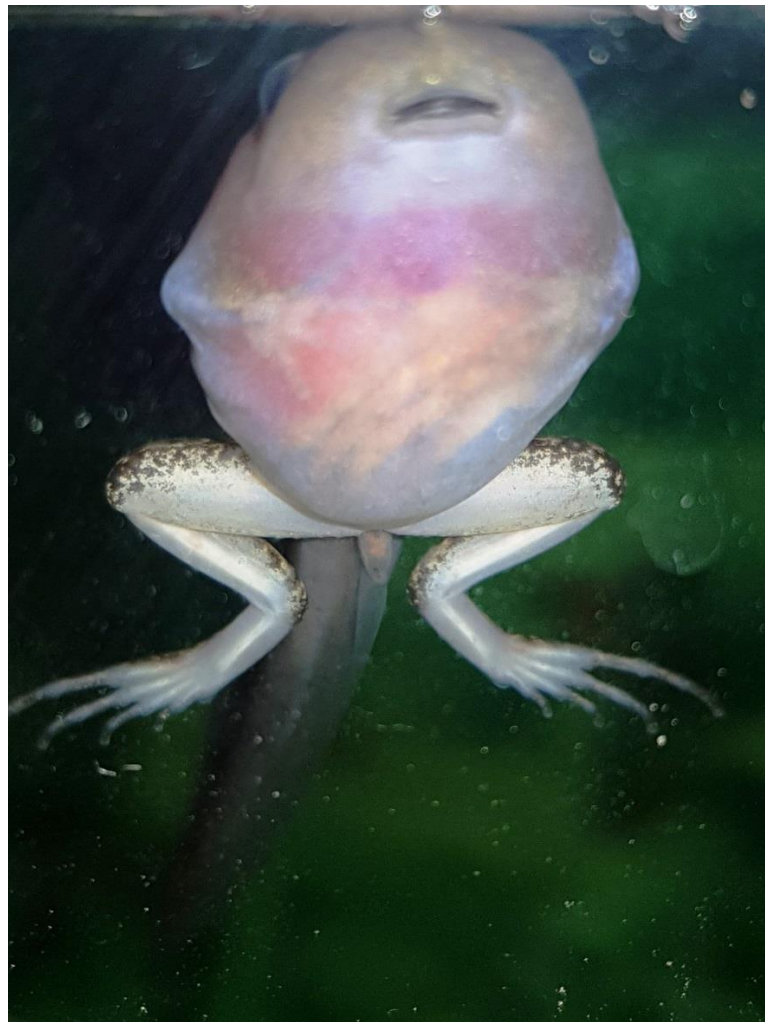
We cannot thank you all enough for your ongoing contributions to our project, and please keep those records coming, even if it's the same species each day on your daily walk by the creek/pond, on your weekend hike, or in your backyard pond. Who knows how many verified records we can get to? Can we reach 500,000, or maybe ONE MILLION!!! **Happy frogging! FrogID project. Australian's first national frog count.**

**JUST A FRIENDLY REMINDER  
NO HARD COPY FROGCALLS**

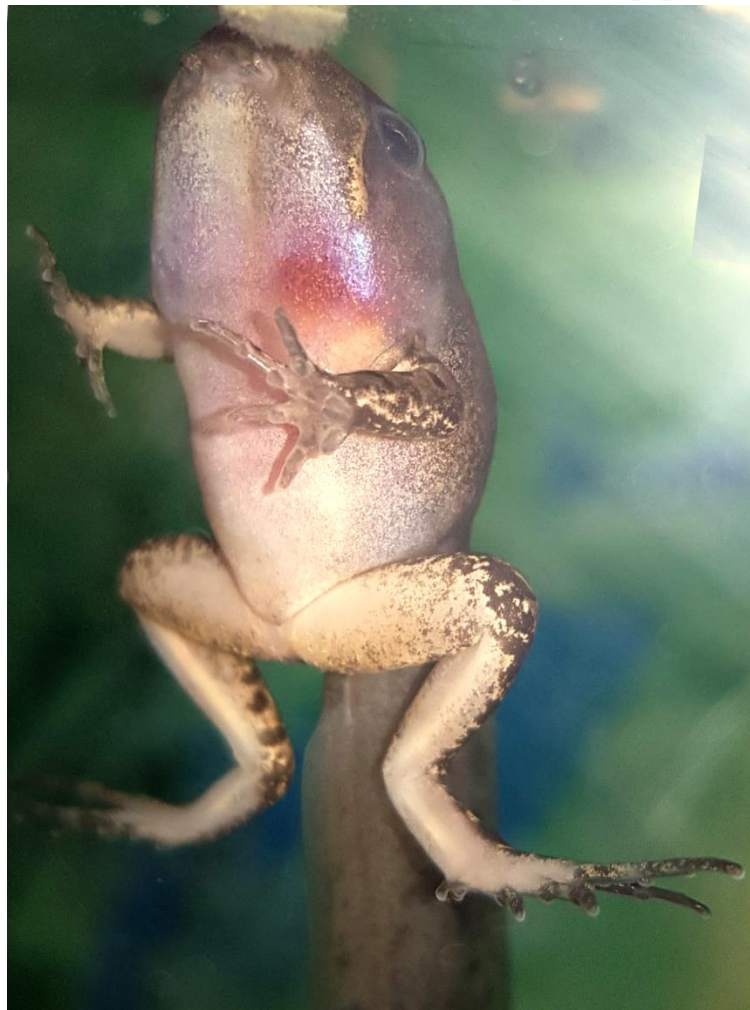


**IN OCTOBER AND FEBRUARY**

**but our newsletters are still emailed to you every  
2 months, electronically, as a pdf digital attachment.**



**Michelle Linn, Taree *Limnodynastes* tadpole arm pop out**



## WHY IS AUSTRALIA A GLOBAL LEADER IN WILDLIFE EXTINCTIONS?



**P**lant and animal species in Australia are becoming extinct as fast as ever. Why is it happening? And what would it take to reverse the decline? When Captain Cook sailed into Botany Bay, the forests fringing the waters abounded with marsupials such as quolls and bandicoots, and the skies teemed with birds. The story was the same along the Yarra in what would become Melbourne and, down south, "tigers" roamed the island of Tasmania.

Since colonisation, about 100 of Australia's unique flora and fauna species have been wiped off the planet. The rate of loss, which is as comprehensive as anywhere else on Earth, has not slowed over the past 200 years.

Why are the losses happening so fast, and why are so many experts frustrated at the failure to reverse the decline?

**What has become extinct?** After its neighbour Indonesia, Australia has the second-largest number of endemic species – plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Some other countries, such as Colombia, have a greater number of species overall but, in terms of unique wildlife, Australia is nearly at the top. Since colonisation, Australia has lost 34 mammals, which is about the same number as the rest of the world combined over the past 200 years. "We have just about the most responsibility for global biodiversity, more than for the US, or any other European country. And, even though we don't have the most mammal species, we have had more mammal extinctions than any other country," says eminent ecologist Professor Hugh Possingham. "We are losing species at a similar rate to what we were 200 years ago and it's fast, as fast as anywhere on the planet," says Possingham, a laureate fellow of the Australian Research Council, adding that populations of threatened species are declining at a rate of 1 per cent a year.

In Australia, there are 8128 accepted described species known as chordate, which include vertebrates, as well as 98,703 invertebrates, 24,716 plants, 11,846 fungi and around 4186 in other groups. Since federal laws were introduced in 1999, the list of threatened species and ecosystems has grown by more than a third – from 1483 to 1974. As well as some animal species, Australia's flora is under severe pressure: 37 species have been declared

extinct, including the short spider orchid, Maiden's Bush-pea, the bridal flower and Daintree's river banana. There are 1336 species of flora listed as threatened, including 191 that are critically endangered across the continent, such as the Canberra spider orchid, the ormeau bottle tree from south-east Queensland, the ballerina orchid from south-west Western Australia, the Wimmera bottle brush from western Victoria and the nightcap oak from north-east NSW.

The continent's initial wave of extinctions surged initially due to hunting, rapid urban and agricultural expansion for the burgeoning wool industry as well as the introduction of domestic cats, rabbits and foxes. Black rats ravaged island habitats. Then governments introduced policies to speed up the process.

**Why did we pay to kill millions of marsupials?** In the 1800s, NSW and Queensland devised laws first incentivising, and then actually mandating, killing of native marsupials. The laws were enacted to deal with the perceived competition for feed between livestock and kangaroos and wallabies as well as smaller mammals such as bandicoots, quolls and potoroos. The first payments for dingo scalps were offered in the 1830s. (Foxes, which were introduced in the 1870s, were also made eligible for bounties.)

Between 1877 and 1930, more than 27 million animals were killed in Queensland under the bounty system established by the Marsupial Destruction Act.

The marsupial destruction acts have never really been talked about much.

In NSW, in 1879, the Marsupial Destruction Bill was proposed to the state's parliament. It was incorporated to the Pastures and Stock Protection Act and paid bounties for 21 million kangaroos and wallabies and 3 million smaller marsupials over 20 years to 1901.

The popularity of the bounty systems made them unaffordable for state governments so they abandoned payments after several years, says University of Sydney Professor Chris Dickman. But with the requirement to cull marsupials still in place, there was a significant increase in the already popular practice of baiting with strychnine poisoning. "The marsupial destruction acts have never really been talked about much, and it doesn't help that there wasn't a lot of natural history being done at the time, too," Professor Dickman says. Baiting programs for native animals were wound up in the 1930s.

**What else has caused the extinctions?** Australia's rate of extinctions is expected to continue on the same trajectory due to ongoing land clearing, habitat degradation, bushfire and continued pressure from cats, foxes and other feral animals such as deer, Dickman says. "In Australia, people are getting more and more concerned that even previously common species are disappearing from their old ranges. The



greater glider populations were declining even before the fires [last summer] and no one is quite sure why.

"Brush-tailed possums were once common right across the country, even in arid areas in Central Australia but, while they are still in good numbers in cities, they are extinct from vast areas of their natural range.

"People think the grey-headed flying fox is doing OK but their numbers have fallen dramatically. They used to be spoken about like the passenger pigeon in the US, with huge colonies flying over and blackening the dusk and sky."

Government policies have shifted over time but habitat loss from urban development and agriculture have remained mainstay threats. According to the CSIRO, habitat loss from land clearing is a primary driver of biodiversity loss in Australia. About 8 million hectares of threatened species' habitats were cleared between 2000 and 2017 but 93 per cent of these were not assessed under the legislation, despite the powers existing to do so, a study by leading Australian ecologists found in 2019.

Koalas have become a particularly high-profile casualty. Koala habitats in NSW and Queensland have been destroyed at a faster rate since the animal was declared vulnerable in 2012 than before, a survey released in April shows. In NSW, koala habitat destruction increased by about 32 per cent and in Queensland by about seven per cent. Since 2001, Queensland's koala population has halved and the NSW population has declined by between 33 per cent and 61 per cent, according to two reports by science consultants Biolink.

**Why doesn't the law stop extinctions?** While state laws had dealt with protecting threatened species, national oversight and co-ordination did not exist until 1999 when the federal government became involved, with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. But, 20 years down the track, according to the crossbench senator who helped the Howard government install the landmark laws, "clearly, it's not working well".

Former Democrats senator Andrew Bartlett has said the "most obvious failure is, despite the fact conditions can be attached to project approvals, there are just so many cases where conditions aren't adhered to. There are no efforts to check and no penalties." From the start, the laws did not compel the minister to prevent destruction of threatened species habitat. In 2006, amendments were made to remove the community's right to appeal decisions under the Act. Also, while the Environment Department was initially compelled to investigate public nominations for listing species under the threatened status, that was changed to allow ministerial discretion under a "priority list".

Under the act, there are processes to identify threatened species or ecological communities as well as things that threaten multiple species, such as the effect of rabbits on wildlife. Once wildlife is listed, recovery plans or conservation advice are prepared that describe how to reduce the threats to their survival. The report found that 79 per cent of approvals were non-compliant or contained

errors. Australian National University ecologist Professor Sarah Legge says while there were clear legal processes for listing threatened wildlife and recovery plans to help species recover, "there is no legal requirement for anyone to fund or implement these plans or advice, nor be accountable for their progress – and that's a big problem".

A report in June from the Commonwealth Auditor-General found the federal Environment Department is failing to protect endangered wildlife and manage conflicts of interest in development approvals, and says its work is plagued with errors. The report found that 79 per cent of approvals were non-compliant or contained errors and most decisions were not made within statutory timeframes.

The department's regulation is "not proportionate to environmental risk", project assessments are "not effective or efficient", approval conditions to manage projects' environmental damage are "not assessed with rigour, are non-compliant with procedural guidance and contain clerical or administrative errors", according to the Auditor-General.

**What are the next big extinction threats?** The Black Summer fires dramatically increased the scale of immediate environmental risk with nearly 10 million hectares of the eastern states torched after years of prolonged drought.

The Bureau of Meteorology told the Bushfire royal commission that global warming was the cause of a long-term warming trend, coupled with a reduction of rainfall in southern Australia in winter between April and October, which was creating drier fuel in forests, better burning conditions and overall increased fire risk.

After the fires, the Threatened Species Commission, which was set up under the 1999 laws to advise the federal Environment Minister, identified 119 animal species requiring urgent intervention to prevent extinction, including 17 birds, 20 mammals, 23 reptiles, 16 frogs, 22 crayfish, 16 species of fish and five insects or spiders. And now climate change is expected to increase the risk of extinctions.

"Climate change is a threat multiplier," says Macquarie University climate scientist and biologist Professor Lesley Hughes. "As the temperature continues to rise and we get more heatwaves, droughts and bushfires, threatened species will be in an even worse place than they are now." Weeds choke native flora out of the landscape, and alter the ecology ...

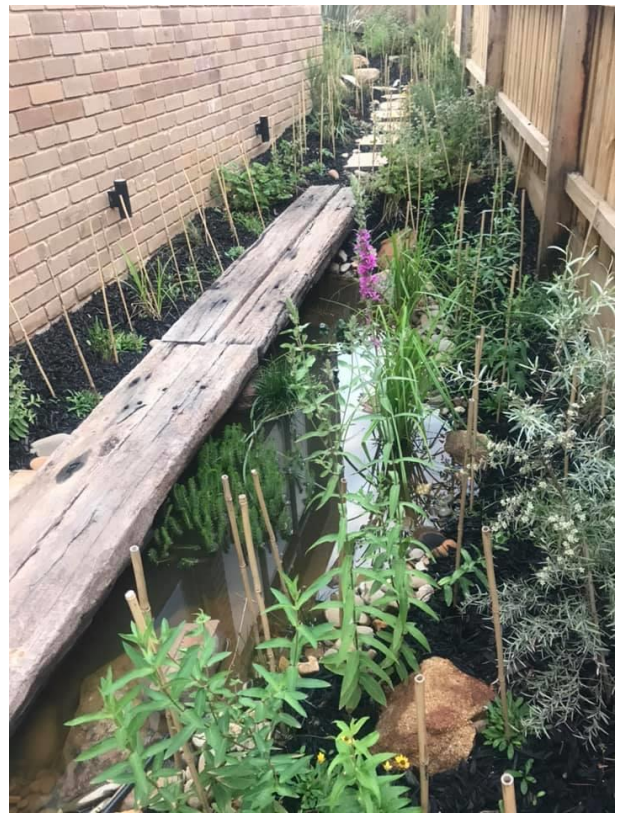
A CSIRO study quantifying extinction risk estimated that climate change would increase the rate of losses about five-fold, with 10 birds and seven mammals becoming extinct in the next 20 years "without purposeful intervention". Alongside land clearing, invasive species of flora and fauna pose the greatest risk of further extinctions in native animals.

**Continued on page 9**





## FROG PONDS



**Facebook group, Field Naturalists Club of Victoria** 16,409 members <https://www.facebook.com/groups/191099460990243/> They had an enquiry in June about ponds. Here are some responses. Pond built by Anthony Bigelow and son last year. Photos front page, above, top right and below. The pond is in a low lying area of the yard, and is getting around 2-3hrs of sun per day at present. It's just receiving rainfall at present and is filling naturally from excess runoff within the garden. "We're not using any chemicals or fertilisers on the native plants in the garden beds; 90% of which have been locally sourced from our nearest indigenous nursery. During summer, the water got low, but even then with the occasional shower it kept at a steady level. The pond liner is naturally higher closer to the side of the house, so any excess water drains out of the side nearest the fence in the photos and then out the back gate." Thanks Anthony. You are a legend!



Lou Wolfers from the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, makes ponds out of big pots, they need to be very big and deep to maintain a good amount of water and to keep a more stable temperature. See 2 photos, above and top left next page. "I have lilies, elodea, water snails and small native fish to keep the mozzies out. The wood allows the frogs to climb in and out during breeding season. The small fish (only a few centimetres) won't eat the frog spawn. Then plant lots of reedy and dense bushes for frogs to hide in around the pot. Once properly established you don't need to feed any of the fish or snails. The lilies and plants are held in a ceramic pot sealed at the base with 2/3 soil and 1/3 washed sand so no soil leaching. This pot above is about 1 metre wide. Located under a tree where it gets morning sun (no afternoon sun as it overheats the pond). It's been going for over 10 years. I thin the lilies out every couple of years. Even have a self seeded tea tree growing in it."





**FROGID APP** Build a frog habitat in your garden: for those who want to get your hands dirty and don't yet have a frog pond, this could be a good time to start. Upcycle that old bathtub, recycle some old downpipes, create an oasis for your froggy friends. Don't forget to record any frogs once they arrive, and send in pictures of your garden with your submissions on the Australian Museum FrogID app.

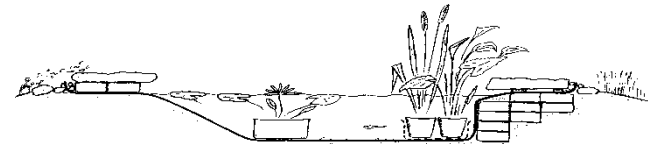


Frog pond above by Helen Hadobas

Frog egg mass in backyard pond by Vera Charles



Adam Dixon from the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, on Facebook (above). Removing exotic groundcovers and growing natives. Glass shrimp, Murray River rainbow fish and plenty of frogs. above Inner city pond, Jillie Streit below



↑ Gaps between bricks to let frogs out.

↑ Gaps under slab or decking

See Frog Facts 2, Frog Friendly Gardens at [www.fats.org.au](http://www.fats.org.au) under the publications tab.



From Wendy Ivanusec



**THE FATS AGM AND AUGUST ORDINARY MEETING will commence at 7 pm, (arrive from 6.30 pm) and end about 10 pm, at the Education Centre, Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush Bay.** FATS meetings are usually held on the **first Friday of every EVEN month** February, April, June, August, October and December. Call, check our web site, Facebook page or email us for further directions. We hold 6 informative, informal, topical, practical and free meetings each year. Visitors are welcome. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations, field studies and trips, have displays at local events, produce the newsletter FROGCALL and FROGFACTS information sheets. FATS exhibit at many community fairs and shows. Please contact Events Coordinator Kathy Potter if you can assist as a frog explainer, even for an hour. No experience required. Encourage your frog friends to join or donate to FATS. Donations help with the costs of frog rescue, student grants, research and advocacy. All expressions of opinion and information in FrogCall are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as an official opinion of the FATS Committee, unless expressly so stated.

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**FATS ON FACEBOOK:** FATS has about 3,150 Facebook members from across the world. Posts vary from husbandry, disease and frog identification enquiries, to photos and posts about pets, gardens, wild frogs, research, new discoveries, jokes and habitats from all over the world. The page includes dozens of information files.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FATSNSW/>

**RESCUED FROGS** are at our meetings. Contact us if you wish to adopt a frog. A cash donation of \$50 is appreciated to cover care and feeding costs. Sorry we have no EFTPOS. FATS must sight your current amphibian licence. Licences can be obtained from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Environment and Heritage (link below). Please join FATS before adopting a frog. This can be done at the meeting. Most rescued frogs have not had a vet visit unless obviously ill. Please take you new, formerly wild pet to an experienced herp vet for an annual check-up and possible worming and/or antibiotics after adoption. Some vets offer discounts.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/licences-and-permits/wildlife-licences/native-animals-as-pets/frog-keeper-licences>

**FATS has student memberships for \$20 annually with electronic FrogCall (but no hard copy mail outs).**  
<https://www.fats.org.au/membership-form>



**Thank you to the committee members, FrogCall supporters, talented meeting speakers, Frog-O-Graphic competition entrants, event participants and organisers David, Kathy and Harriet Potter, Sarah and Ryan Kershaw. The FrogCall articles, photos, media and webpage links, membership administration and envelope preparation are greatly appreciated. Special thanks to regular newsletter contributors, Robert Wall, George Madani, Karen & Arthur White, Andrew Nelson, Josie Styles, Wendy & Phillip Grimm and Marion Anstis.**



**FROGWATCH HELPLINE 0419 249 728**

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General Committee members	Natalia Sabatino, Andre Rank and Vicki Deluca		



**Continued from page 5** Introduced mammals such as deer and rabbits compete with natives for food and destroy their habitat. Invasive weeds have spread across the continent, replacing endemic species, dominating ecosystems and reducing plant diversity. There are 32 listed weeds of national significance such as bitou bush, gamba grass, fireweed and lantana. Invasive Species Council chief executive Andrew Cox says introduced pests and weeds are "the major threat to 82 per cent of all terrestrial threatened species in Australia".

Feral and domestic cats continue to wipe out small native animals, killing more than 1.5 billion native reptiles, birds and mammals a year, according to the Threatened Species Recovery Hub. Feral cats have established self-sustaining populations across the country. They inhabit 99.8 per cent of the continent and currently pose a threat to many threatened animals including bilbies, numbats, parrots, possums and lizards.

Of Australia's 29 mammal species that have become extinct, cats have been the main contributor to 20 of them.

The Invasive Species Council's Andrew Cox says twin impacts from coronavirus and bushfires were compounding the impacts from invasive weeds on native wildlife, which could cause "years of effort to be wasted". Weeds choke native flora out of the landscape, and alter the ecology that native fauna have evolved to depend on. "Almost all the volunteer weeding programs around the country [run by councils and community groups] have been halted," Cox says. "Weeding is critical now, particularly in eastern Australia after the bushfires, particularly since we also got a lot of rainfall in recent weeks and the weeds are going gangbusters. Weeds thrive in disruption [from fires] and bad land management and they're getting a free hand during this period."

**How much would it cost to stop extinctions?** Australians spend about \$13 billion a year on pet food, pet accessories and medical treatments for their pets, according to a survey by Animal Medicines Australia in 2019. It would cost \$1.6 billion to improve the status of all of Australia's threatened species and return their health to the point where they can be removed from lists of at-risk flora and fauna, through protections from land clearing and invasive species, habitat restoration and other means, a scientific paper published in October in *Conservation Letters* estimated. But spending on Australia's threatened species by the federal government dropped from \$86.9 million in 2017-18 to \$49.6 million in 2018-19. The researchers forecast it would grow to \$54.6 million this financial year.

They found public investment for Australia's 1700 threatened species, across state and federal governments, was far below comparable wealthy nations. Australia's threatened species spending was about \$122 million a year. By contrast, the US, with a similar list of 1662 threatened species, spent at least \$2.1 billion a year from 2011 to 2016. However, since the Black Summer fires, the Morrison government has announced \$200 million for wildlife recovery. Biodiversity makes us happy and it makes us a lot of money. Professor Possingham points to the 200 species we've lost and the others we'll continue to

lose. "For me, it's an ethical question," he says. "What right do we have to do that?" "The park at the end of my street used to have two pairs of willy wagtails 20 years ago, 10 years ago it had one pair, and now we've got none – 50 years ago, there were probably five pairs."

While governments face pressure from developers to speed through project approvals, Possingham points out that Australia's wildlife losses not only impact people's everyday enjoyment but also reduce our economic prosperity. "The bottom line is, biodiversity makes us happy and it makes us a lot of money," he says. "People are naturally attracted to diversity. Gardens aren't planted with row after row of the same plants. "Before we wiped out so many of our animals, you would've been able to go for a walk in the bush and see a dozen species of mammals, but now you're lucky to see a kangaroo. "The dawn chorus that we love is diminishing, not necessarily because species are going extinct but their overall abundance is declining.

"Even if you don't care about nature, the business case is very strong. If your company was running Australia Inc, you would spend at least a billion dollars a year on preventing biodiversity loss because so many pay us to travel here and look at our wildlife."

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/why-is-australia-a-global-leader-in-wildlife-extinctions-20200717-p55cyd.html> By Mike Foley 20 July 2020



**Perons Tree Frog *Litoria peroni* Photo Josie Styles**



## EXOTIC FROG FOUND AMONG BANANAS AT LLANELLI SUPERMARKET UK



**RSPCA** The frog has been nicknamed "Asda" after he was found among bananas in the store in Llanelli

**A** stowaway exotic frog has ended up in a supermarket in Carmarthenshire after a 5,000-mile trip from South America. Staff at Asda in Llanelli spotted the thumb-sized amphibian among bunches of bananas and called the RSPCA. It is thought the frog, nicknamed Asda, arrived from Colombia, where hundreds of thousands of tonnes of the fruit are produced and sent to the UK each year. It is being cared for by specialists in Pembrokeshire where he is feasting on crickets and flies, rescuers say.

RSPCA Cymru was alerted after an eagle-eyed member of staff spotted the frog while on shift at the Murray Street store on 29 June. Amphibians are capable of slowing down their metabolism under different environmental conditions, which is thought to be how the frog survived the long journey without food or water into a cooler climate. The RSPCA has thanked Asda staff for spotting and caring for the frog

Asda has now been transferred to Silent World Zoo To You, a marine life specialist centre in Haverfordwest where he will now live in a planted, humid environment. Staff at Silent World believe he is a banana tree frog. This adventurous frog has travelled more than 5,000 miles amid a bunch of bananas, splitting from his native Colombia before ending up at a Llanelli superstore. It's certainly a long old journey for the weekly shop." He is now settling into his new home at a specialist centre in Pembrokeshire

Finding frogs among bananas is not a rare occurrence, according to Ginny Spenceley, from Silent World. "With fruit deliveries no longer sprayed or treated, it isn't uncommon for a frog or spider to hitch a ride," she said. "Fortunately, he's doing really well and, funnily enough, got very comfortable in a banana skin as we helped settle him into his new, less familiar surroundings."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-53300142> 6 July 2020 Thanks for sharing this article Andrew Nelson.

## FARMING TOWN PULLS OFF EPIC BACKYARD BLITZ TO BRING STORMWATER EYESORE TO LIFE AS TRANQUIL WETLAND



**C**ommunity volunteers at Pinnaroo have transformed a stormwater collection site, pictured in 2010, near the centre of the town into a tranquil wetland. (Supplied: Italo Vardaro) This is what hard work and town pride can do. Key points: Pinnaroo creates its own wetland oasis within SA's arid Murray Mallee. Seed funding is used to create a masterplan, grant secured for toilets and shelter. Volunteer working bees establish vegetation and control bulrushes

The residents of Pinnaroo have spent the past eight years undertaking their own backyard blitz, bringing an unsightly stormwater dam to life as a tranquil wetland. It gives motorists a reason to stop at their town, on the border of South Australia in the Murray Mallee, and has become a haven for locals to connect with each other and nature.

They have even had a brush with fame with their wetland appearing in ABC's Gardening Australia magazine this month, showcasing images taken by local photographer Italo Vardaro.



**Pinnaroo resident Jill Nickolls has been driving the wetland project.** (Supplied: Italo Vardaro, courtesy of ABC Gardening Australia magazine)



It was a feather in the cap for Jill Nickolls, a retired teacher who married into the district and has been one of the driving forces behind the makeover as chairperson of the Friends of Pinnaroo Wetland. "People say it's got a really serene feel, they feel at peace, even though it's on the main road," she said. Pinnaroo's wetland is the only water attraction in miles — not counting farm dams — and because of this, the town chooses to keep it permanently wet. "We really don't have any groundwater, all our water is underground, so to have a wetland in the mallee is almost an oxymoron in a way," Ms Nickolls said.

It has become a popular place to meet up for coffee, bring the kids to explore nature or simply sit and watch the birdlife, which includes crakes and grebes. "I love watching the young mums with their little ones in the stroller, having a coffee on the lawn," Ms Nickolls said.



**The wetland has become a retreat for residents in the township of Pinnaroo and attracted new birdlife including crakes and grebes.***(Supplied: Italo Vardaro, courtesy of ABC Gardening Australia magazine)*

**Grants, goodwill and working bees** The wetland borders the Mallee Highway and was the site of an old railway dam where, from 1906, steam trains refilled before returning to Adelaide. In 2010 the local council upgraded its stormwater system and the site became a collection dam for the town's water run-off. At that point the community was offered the chance to step in and decided to create something special.

They started with council seeding money to develop a masterplan, then won a grant to cover the cost of bigger items including a shelter, toilets and signage. But labour on the footbridges was courtesy a local contractor, the golf club planted the lawns and a small army of volunteers hold regular working bees to design the wetlands. Even students at the local school are involved, helping with planting and maintenance. "There's a strong sense of ownership,

we never have any graffiti, I don't think the locals or the schoolchildren would allow it."

**Battle with bulrushes** If weeds are a gardener's worst nightmare, the same can be said of bulrushes at wetlands.

They can completely smother the water and as Pinnaroo locals discovered, are nearly impossible to eradicate. "The bulrushes were completely through the old railway dam," Ms Nickolls said. Early on, the residents thought they could wipe them out completely. "We'd been told if we go down there in Autumn and cut the reeds below the water line, they would drown," Ms Nickolls said.



**Pinnaroo residents are vigilant in removing bulrushes that would otherwise overtake the wetlands.***(Supplied: Italo Vardaro, courtesy of ABC Gardening Australia magazine)*

Armed with machetes and secateurs they waded out into the water to take care of the problem for once and for all. Two days later they returned to a disheartening sight. "There they all were with their heads above water!" Ms Nickolls said of the troublesome reeds. "So that was pretty traumatic, but we've now got on top of the reed, one of our fellows, Steve Williams, goes down there every weekend and if there's any bulrush he deals with them."

The wetland has become a place for meeting up as well as quiet reflection.*(Supplied: Italo Vardaro, courtesy of ABC Gardening Australia magazine)* The bulrushes may be under control but that doesn't mean there is not more work to be done. The latest project is to install a meditation seat in honour of a former Pinnaroo boy — surfer, Nick Edwards, who was killed by a shark in Western Australia. "Like any garden it's never finished, we're working on a meditation nook, somewhere people can come and reflect," Ms Nickolls said.

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-15/town-backyard-blitz-turns-stormwater-drain-into-tranquil-wetland/12335650?utm\\_source=abc\\_news&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-15/town-backyard-blitz-turns-stormwater-drain-into-tranquil-wetland/12335650?utm_source=abc_news&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_content=mail&utm_campaign=abc_news) from Facebook ABC Riverland By Catherine Heuzenroeder



## FATS 2020 - 2021 Spring / Summer Fieldtrips Program

**Please book your place on field-trips; due to strong demand, numbers are limited. 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 last few days, whether the field trip is proceeding or has been cancelled. Phone Robert on 9681 5308.**

### **26 September 7.30 pm Norah Head, Central Coast Leader: Grant Webster**

Take the expressway north. After approx. 70km, take the Sparks Road exit towards Norah Head. The Bowling club is about 30mins away. Meet in the carpark at the Norah Head Bowling and Sports Club, at the end of Victoria Street, Norah Head.

One of the features of the coastal floodplains were the wetlands that formed in the swales of ancient sand dunes. This was the home of “Wallum” habitat. Wallum was originally the name given to species of Banksia by the traditional owners of the Sunshine Coast. Over time, this name was broadened to refer to the complex of swamps, heaths and woodlands growing on the low sandy soils along the coastal strip. Today, these wetlands grimly hang on in isolated pockets on the highly-urbanised coastal strip. On this fieldtrip, we will look at the coastal heathlands, particularly Wallum habitat. We will look at some of the unique frog species that have adapted to the dark, tannin-stained, highly-acidic waters of these coastal heaths.

Grant’s research takes him to many unusual frogging locations. Tonight, we are fortunate to once again have Grant lend his time and skills to show us another of his research sites. Grant has an unrivalled familiarity with the wallum habitat and of the broader coastal heathlands. He is expertly placed to show us the unique ecology of these areas.

### **10 October 8.00 pm Castlereagh Nature Reserve Leader: Peter Spradbrow**

Meet at the Shell Service Station, Richmond Rd, Berkshire Park (opposite Windsor Downs Estate). It is between St Marys Rd and Llandilo Rd.

Natural disturbances such as fire, drought, windstorms, floods, landslides and insect attacks are important natural processes that help create a diverse range of habitats. Many animal species respond differently to natural disturbances, and importantly, to the frequency of these disturbances. Sometimes, we need to be careful as to what we regard as “catastrophic”. Often, more subtle human-induced manipulation of the environment can prove far more disastrous for wildlife. Too-frequent burn-offs, suburban drainage works, fragmentation of the landscape, run-off from roads etc. can have a far greater impact on our wildlife than periodic drought. Tonight, we will look at some of the harsh conditions that confront Castlereagh’s woodlands, and how our frogs have learned to cope with them. We will look at the man-made disturbances and compare them with the natural disturbances. We will try to unravel the effects these have on the local frogs.

Peter has studied these woodlands all of his life. His acute observations have given him a great understanding and feel for this area, and of the subtle changes to the wildlife here. Tonight, he will discuss the changes he has seen to these very important woodland remnants.

**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 fieldtrips are strictly for members only – newcomers are however, welcome to take out membership before the commencement of the fieldtrip. 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.**