

FrogSheet

Highlights

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FROM THE PRESIDENT - Ric Natrass

Annual General Meetings are often very dull affairs, but this year's AGM is going to be very different. Firstly, my old mate and colleague, Ranger Tim Moore from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Channel 10's Totally Wild, will be our guest speaker. So this will be a golden opportunity for any of his fans to catch him up for a chat. Tell your kids Ranger Tim will be at the AGM and see if they'll let you stay away. As well, the AGM is being held at Bowman Park in Bardon - the site where the Brisbane City Council and the Society's Dr Phil Bird cooperated to restore a bit of urban wetland habitat. BCC councillors Judy Magub and Geraldine Knapp, who vigorously supported the creek restoration, will be there as well. Phil will provide commentary on the project from the beginning to the present day. The location has BBQ facilities, so after the slightly dull administrative bits, members, families and friends will be encouraged to party. See you there!

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

Rain, Rain, don't go away, please stay for a few more days. Yes! It's raining, and just as tighter water restrictions are about to be implemented. What started out as teasing rain two days ago has turned into beautiful soaking rain. As I sat down to write this, the calls of Eastern Sedgefrogs (*Litoria fallax*) and a Graceful Treefrog (*Litoria gracilentata*) could be heard. Unable to resist the urge to don the headtorch, I found six Naked Treefrogs (*Litoria rubella*) peering over a window frame, and my 'Old Faithful' Striped Marshfrog (*Limnodynastes peronii*) in his favourite spot. The display held at the Gladstone Eco-fest in June was very successful. There were times when people had to wait in line for their questions to be answered. It is wonderful to receive so much interest. Whilst the winter is a fairly quiet time, there have still been inquiries to answer and meetings etc with other organisations looking at including 'frogs' in their programs. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to advertise upcoming events in the frogsheet before they happen. There are presently a few things in the pipeline, since these events have not been finalized, I am unable to advertise. Members wanting to know what's happening in their area can contact me regularly for an upgrade on 49757662 or check out our website. Alternatively, you can e-mail me on < njjard@bigpond.com.au > and arrange to be notified via e-mail. Happy frogging for the new season and welcome to new members.

Keep smilin' Jodi J

ASHGROVE

As you can imagine, not a lot has happened over the last few months. The Striped Marshfrog and Tusked Frog have been heard occasionally, but we are all praying for rain so that the treefrogs have a better summer than the last. School talks have continued through the cooler months which shows the interest in frogs does not disappear when the frogs have their rest during winter. The 'New Creek' at Bowman Park continues to look more like a habitat for wildlife and this year has had a surprise visit from the feathered kind. The Swift Parrot, one of Australia's rarest birds, made Bowman Park its temporary home in July and left at the end of August. The Tasmanian flock of migrating birds, bright green with red under the wing and tail, usually only fly as far north as New South Wales. While I was visiting overseas in May, I was lucky to see one frog, *Rana lessonae*, and some smooth newts in England and then in Switzerland, I saw in my friend's frog pond 3 *Rana esculenta* and 2 *Rana lessonae*, frog spawn and black salamanders. Frog watching was made a lot easier than here as they are out during the day. Hope to see you at Bowman Park for the AGM.

Jenny Holdway

AND THEN THERE WERE.....

Although I made every effort to get to bed early the night before, it was of little use. The excitement of the pending day's events made sleep little more than wishful thinking and when the alarm clock finally announced the approaching dawn it was with relief, rather than the usual angst, that I reached

across to turn it off.

It is only a few hours drive from A.N.U in Canberra to Kosciusko and at that time in the morning there was little more than me and the morning dew on the roads. I made it to a small researchers hut just below the summit of Kosciusko in time for breakfast with Dave Hunter and his survey crew.

Dave, for the last few years, has been monitoring populations of the Corroboree Frog, *Pseudophryne corroboree* and has been a critical part of the recovery team set up to help this highly endangered species. Unfortunately the news thus far was not good; on the preceding days the survey team had turned up very few frogs, but expectations were still high, for today we were going out to the second largest remaining known population of frogs.

Above: Wilderness areas of the N.P still support a staggering diversity of wild flowers It had been a very late summer up on the high plains (although those of us that live around Melbourne might lament missing a summer altogether) and the wildflowers were in full bloom. While I was, of course, up there to see Corroboree Frogs I could not help but get caught up in the splendor of the herb fields with all manner of flowering plants stretching as far as the eye could see.

While I have been frog hunting on many occasions and am quite accustomed to wandering around making the sound of a particular frog in order to get it to call back to me, it was with some surprise how self-conscious I felt wandering through the alpine bogs yelling 'Hey Frog' at the top of my voice. Nevertheless, after a short while, I too joined in the chorus of 'Hey Frog' and was rewarded eventually when my first Corroboree Frog responded. We walked for many kilometres hearing only the odd frog here and there.

Where are all the Corroboree Frogs?

At last Dave announced our arrival at 'the site' and we quickly spread out over the bog, taking it in turns to yell the now all too familiar 'Hey Frog' chant. Excitement however turned to dismay as the 26 or more frogs recorded here just the year before was reduced to the grand total of eight calling males, with four of those around a single pond (picture below).

A few of us stood around this one particular pond and I couldn't help thinking 'Is this the last time I will ever hear this animal in the wild?' It was an incredibly moving experience standing out in the middle of this large alpine bog, listening to the last chorus this population may ever muster.

I never did see a Corroboree Frog that day, but somehow it just didn't seem to matter. Craig Cleeland

TRUST FUND:

Trust Fund Balance as at November 12th 2001 is \$ 3,375.35. Thank you to:- Beth Newman, Jeanette Jones and Fred our donation frogbin.

FROG IDENTIFICATION:

Frog Identification CD ROM I have not received any interest in our CD Rom library and I am wondering if this is because not many of our members have this facility on their computers, or the area in which I live. If you are interested, please phone me on 3366 1868 and we can discuss a way for you to borrow it. Jenny Holdway

POND ALGAE:

Pond Algae At this time of the year, you may be noticing the growth of stringy algae in your garden ponds or dams etc. There are a few reasons why it grows

1. Water is too shallow and warms up quickly.
2. Too much sun.
3. High amounts of nutrients present in the water. All of these are somewhat necessary for healthy tadpoles, so what can you do about it?

The use of commercial algaecides is not recommended as you are adding chemicals to the water that can harm the tadpoles, fish and plants. One solution, that has proven to work quite well, is to put small bundles of barley straw in the water and as it breaks down it releases an inhibitor which then gets rid of the algae. It is wise to bundle the hay before placing it in the water and this can be done by string, placing it in a stocking or encasing it in some chicken wire. A weight might be required to sink the hay as well. If any member has any other good ideas for this unsightly problem, we would love to hear from you.

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A special time for 'froggers': Overview of Frog Week 2001

'A special time for froggers', at least so wrote Denise Voltz in an article published by the Queensland Sun on the Frog Week activities at O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse, and who would I be to argue. I know I have written before of the food, the frogs and the people that make Frog Week in early December at O'Reilly's a memorable event; but I have failed on prior attempts to give a good account of what is in store for those who have yet to make the journey up the mountain.

Last year was the seventh annual Frog Week and I arrived late to find everybody in the theatre

listening intently to Dave Stewart (Nature Sounds) replaying some of his more unusual recordings from over the years. Many of the participants and presenters are regulars of Frog Week and yet there is always something new to see and hear. Harry Hines (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service) topped off the morning by finding an Assa Darlingtoni, Hip Pocket Frog on one of the nearby trails. It was an unusual Assa with the most vivid yellow spotting over its body.

That evening we took a bus trip out to Kerry Valley, where Ed Meyer (University of Queensland) found some Whistling Treefrogs (*Litoria verreauxi*) around Albert River. Bleating Treefrogs (*L. dentata*) and Naked Treefrogs (*L. rubella*) made their regular appearance on the stonework around the BBQ area of Darlington Park but the highlight for the evening, with the exception of the BBQ itself, was the Ornate Burrowing Frogs (*Limnodynastes ornatus*).

It appears *ornatus* prefers sandy soils and what better than the sand of the children's playground. The *ornatus* literally started appearing from under our feet as we stood there.

I was interested to hear that some recent genetic work might indicate a closer affiliation with *Lechriodus* rather than *Limnodynastes* for this species. Both *Limnodynastes ornatus* and *Lechriodus fletcheri* tadpoles have the shallow fins and rapid larval development that is suited to life in the temporary water bodies in which they are often laid. M. Anstis (2002) described the tadpoles of both as voracious feeders that will readily consume any protein source within the pond including tadpoles of the same species. Both tadpoles have a very similar appearance and look distinctly unlike any other *Limnodynastes* species. Perhaps in the future we might see *Lechriodus ornatus* as a name in field guides for this species!

The next day Harry and Ed took us all down an old snigging trail to Cainbale Creek where we met up with Naomi Doak who is currently working on a PhD project investigating movements of Fleay's Barred Frog (*Mixophyes fleayi*) both within and between populations. Naomi had just located, via radio tracking, a female *M. fleayi* which it appears (by virtue of the 10 grams she had dropped in weight in the past 24 hours) had spawned in the creek the night before. It wasn't long before the spawn was located and Ed managed to catch some *M. fleayi* and *M. fasciolatus* tadpoles swimming in the deeper pools along the creek.

Further along the same trail we came across a drainage line that had Red-Backed Brood Frog (*Pseudophryne coriacea*) tadpoles in it. With some persistent calling we were able to triangulate a male sitting on his nest of eggs. To top the day off, after dinner, we set off to Stockyard Creek to find more Whistling Treefrogs and Cascade Treefrogs (*L. pearsoniana*), but Tim O'Reilly's find of a Tusked Frog (*Adelotus brevis*) was the 'catch of the evening'.

The following day we took a short trip down to Duck Creek. It had been reasonably dry across Lamington National Park for some time and the creek was barely flowing. However, in the larger still pools of water that had formed along the creek, were numerous species of tadpoles. Of particular interest was the high number of tadpoles showing morphological plasticity (changes in physical appearance) presumably triggered by exposure to predator cues in the small ponds. Although work has been done on Striped Marshfrog (*Limnodynastes peronii*) tadpoles to illustrate this in the laboratory, Ed was genuinely surprised to see it so pronounced in these tree frog tadpoles.

The idea of morphological plasticity in tadpoles is not a new one. D.C. Smith and Van Buskirk (1995) demonstrated that competition and predation interacted with the phenotypes of larval *Pseudacris crucifer* and *P. triseriata* in predictable ways. Both species showed some alterations to their physical appearance when raised in the presence of predators. McCollum and Leimberger (1997) and McCollum and Van Buskirk (1996) showed that larval *Hyla chrysoscelis* and *H. versicolor* raised in the presence of predators developed different morphology and colour patterns than those raised alone.

There has been some research that has shown predation does favour tadpoles with shallow, narrow bodies, high tail fins, and a wide tail muscle. Hence some species of tadpoles exposed to dragonfly larvae during development have acquired these features. For more information about tadpole defenses against predators see P. Marantelli (2001).

Between numerous field trips there was time to relax and enjoy the amenities of the guesthouse or to attend the many talks / lectures that are arranged during the day. The presence of frog luminaries such as Gordon Grigg (University of Queensland) made sure the talks were every bit as interesting as the daily field trips.

For a fan of the tail-less amphibian can it get any better than this? Well in fact, for me, it did. Dinner at Rose and Joe's Dam is a regular Frog Week event and for good reason. The chorus of frogs (particularly for a southerner like myself) is exceptional. It is impossible to describe but I have attempted to illustrate this.

So ended another Frog Week at O'Reilly's Rainforest Guest House. Under the guidance of our host Woo O'Reilly, and with the able support of Harry Hines (QPWS), Ed Meyer (University of Queensland) and Dave Stewart (Nature Sounds) we were treated to a broad range of activities including lectures, workshops and of course field trips.

For more information on Frog Week 2002, call O'Reilly's toll free on 1800 688 722.

References: Anstis. M., 2002. Tadpoles of south-eastern Australia, New Holland Publishers. Aust.
Smith, L. D., and J. Van Buskirk. 1995. Phenotypic design, plasticity, and ecological performance in two tadpole species, *American Nat.* 145:211-233
McCollum, S. A., and J. Van Buskirk. 1996. Costs and benefits of a predator-induced polyphenism in the gray tree frog *Hyla chrysoscelis*, *Evolution* 50:583-593.
McCollum, S. A., and J. D. Leimberger. 1997. Predator-induced morphological changes in an amphibian: Predation by dragonflies affects tadpole color, shape, and growth rate, *Oecologia* 109:615-621
Marantelli, P., 2001. Do tasty tadpoles recognize death when they look it in the face? In *the Spotlight*, Vol. 6 No. 1.

Craig Cleland, Queensland Frog Society.

Springbrook Field Trip

A small group of enthusiastic froggers and reptile freaks got together for a weekend at Purlingbrook Falls, Springbrook, last April.

With some rain and not too cold conditions, we were expecting to find some animals. Indeed, land mullets (*Egernia major*) and two patrolling tree monitors (*Varanus varius*) welcomed us. Later, Rob found a leaf tail gecko (*Saltuarius swaini cornutis*) on a tree near the camping ground. Frogs? Well, we heard *Crinia signifera* and our famous *Limnodynastes peronii* at the local creek.

In the evening, we followed Springbrook road further up and stopped at a few dams and creeks. Luckily some more frogs were heard, making the trip worthwhile. *Litoria revelata* were found in a dam and topped the list. *Litoria verreauxii*, *Litoria fallax*, *Mixophyes fasciolatus* and single specimens of *Litoria dentata*, *Assa darlingtoni* and *Lechriodus flechery* were found. Even a single tadpole of *Lechriodus flechery* in a small rock puddle was observed with wonder.

Breathtaking views from the best lookout at night stunned the rest of us. Not a bad weekend after all. Those who missed out should think about our next campout - always fun, always frogs!

Stefan Durtschi

Exotic frog find endangers Natives

Victoria has been invaded - not by the hated cane toad - but by the next worst thing.

The first survey of Melbourne's frog population has uncovered the first invasion by an exotic frog. Scientists say the discovery of the Dwarf Treefrog (*Litoria fallax*), which is a native to Queensland, could be a precursor for the arrival of the cane toad.

Manager of the Amphibian Research Centre, Gerry Marantelli, said a large healthy population was found in Wantirna, which could threaten local animals and spread disease. "It's very worrying. If the Dwarf Treefrog can breed in Melbourne, then probably the cane toad can too," said Mr. Marantelli.

"We've always thought that frogs from Queensland were unlikely to establish in Victoria but the fact this one has bred successfully means we were wrong." The survey of Greater Melbourne found Victoria's most endangered species, the Growling Grass Frog - had a large population in Koo-wee-rup.

"It was totally extinct in the Gippsland area, so this find is heartening," he said. Mr. Marantelli, a biologist, said frogs provided a barometer for the state of the environment, particularly the amount of chemicals in the air. "I would not give Melbourne a clean bill of health, but I don't think we're at risk of choking to death just yet."

Environment Minister, Sherryl Garbutt, said people who find strange frogs should not release them,

but contact the Amphibian Research Centre's Lost Frogs Home.

Sarah Hudson, environment reporter Source – Amphibian Research Centre From the KG/Herald Sun 22/4/02

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Southeast Qld Threatened Frogs Recovery Team

I attended this meeting and listened to Harry Hines and his team discuss what is happening to our threatened frogs and the ways they can be monitored. There are a few recovery plans being completed and these will be submitted to Governments for consideration. Other items such as the status of some frogs, diseases, monitoring and surveys, and captive husbandry projects, to name a few, were also discussed.

Marc Russell, who is the Project Officer for 'Corridors of Green' - a consortium of Land Care groups - is looking for interested members who would like to help out with surveying and monitoring of the Great Barred frog *Mixophyes iteratus*. These Land Care groups operate in the areas of Peachester, Mooloolah and Belli Creek and anywhere the Barred Frog is found.

There will be QFS workshops and field work scheduled in the near future in Peachester and if you would like to take part, please phone Marc on 5494 9608 and register. For the dates of the workshop, please contact Jenny on 3366 1868 or email jennyholdway@hotmail.com

Jenny Holdway

Frogs of Toowoomba poster reprinted

Toowoomba Field Naturalists has reproduced the very successful 'Frogs of Toowoomba' poster. The poster, which was printed with the help of Toowoomba City Council, features the 17 different frogs (and one infamous toad) that can be found in the Toowoomba area. These include species such as the Barking Frog, Ornate Burrowing Frog and the Scarlet-sided Pobblebonk. All of the frogs are featured in full colour photos with a brief description, and some calls to help in their identification.

The posters cost \$5 (picked up from Barry – postage extra) and a limited number are available. If you would like a copy, please contact Toowoomba Field Naturalists Ernie Potts on 4635 4107 or Barry Kenway after September 20 on 4638 5494.

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Help Wanted The Secretary would appreciate some assistance with the quarterly editing of our website, as it is not done as often as it should be due to a lack of time.

If you can help, please contact the Secretary on 3366 1868