

Frogs of the Solomon Islands

Late last year I was lucky enough to take a trip the Solomon Islands and whilst travelling, I also took the chance to have a look at a few of the native frogs of the archipelago. The majority of my time was spent in the western province, visiting islands including Gatokae, Tetepare, New Georgia, Matikuri and Kolombangara. The Solomon Islands support 27 known species of frogs and much remains to be discovered regarding their ecology. No doubt there are also species new to western science still to be discovered. Solomon Island frogs include species from not so familiar genera such as *Platymantis* (also known from PNG and parts of Asia including the Philippines), *Discodeles* and *Brachylodes*, as well as the genus *Litoria* which is a lot more familiar to we Australian froggers.

Perhaps the most recognizable of the Solomon Island frogs is the Eyelash Frog (*Ceratobatrachus guentheri*). Their bizarre body shape, with pointy projections from the nose and above the eyes, has meant they are often included in any natural history features on weird and wonderful frogs of the world. These seem to be fairly common species and I heard them calling from throughout lowland forest on most of the larger islands visited. They were also quite easy to find, staying still under my headlamp and giving me all the time in the world to get a nice photo.

Whilst on Gatokae, I also did a nice hike to some of the higher altitude, fast-flowing streams. Here we managed to get quite a few different frogs including *Platymantis solomonis* (endemic to the Solomon Is), *Platymantis guppyi* and *Brachylodes elegans*. Many of the *Platymantis* proved a lot more difficult to get a good look at, leaping into the creek as soon as they were caught in the headlamp. (Continued page 7)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**PATRON**

Dr Glen Ingram

PRESIDENT

Pearl Symonds

pearl66@bigpond.net.au

VICE PRESIDENTS

Julia Squires

juliasquires@gmail.com

Anne Stewart

annestewart@netspace.net.au

SECRETARY

Jenny Holdway 07 3366 1868

qldfrogs@bigpond.net.au

TREASURER

Karen Tibbits 07 3359 0658

WEBSITE

www.qldfrogs.asn.au

POSTAL ADDRESS

Qld Frog Society Inc

PO Box 7017

East Brisbane

Qld 4169

NEWSLETTER

Naomi Nebe

hi-way@bigpond.net.au

QFS SHOP SALES

Jenny Holdway

07 3366 1868

CONTENTS

Co-ordinators	2
Diary	2
Snippets	3
Reports	3-7
Presidents Report	7-8
Frog Camp	9
Editor's Desk	9-10

FROGSHEET BY EMAIL

We can send the Frogsheet by email (pdf of about 1MB) – or send you an alert by email that the newsletter is available to download (at your leisure) from the website. Send your email address to Jenny at qldfrogsgpond.net.au

AREA CO-ORDINATORS

ASHGROVE

Jenny Holdway – 3366 1868
qldfrogs@bigpond.net.au

BRISBANE CENTRAL

Stefan Durtschi – 3891 6853
comlab@optusnet.com.au

CABOOLTURE/BRIBIE ISLAND

Pauline Fitzgibbon – 3886 9340
pauline.fitzgibbon@epa.qld.gov.au

CHERMSIDE

James Hansen – 0427827443
jamna@powerup.com.au

ESK

Jason Richard – 5424 2373
JRichard@skm.com.au

GOLD COAST

Shane Ho – 5533 8125(AH)

IPSWICH

Ric Natrass – 3288 4100
natrass@ine.com.au

LOGAN CITY

Michael Kels – 327 6752
nature@auswww.com

MOUNT GRAVATT

Janet Willoughby – 3343 3949
janet@codingo.net

FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

Tyrone Lavery
tyrone.lavery@naturalsolutions.com.au

PINE RIVERS

Rod Pattison – 3264 6391
rpattison@optusnet.com.au

REDLANDS

Steve Homewood – 3824 0522
bhomewoo@bigpond.net.au

SUNSHINE COAST

Desley Fricke – 5493 0031 (Glasshouse)
fricked@bigpond.com.au
Patricia Espin – 5446 7908 (North Arm)
espin@iinet.net.au

UPPER BROOKFIELD

Phil Bird frogphil@gmail.com

KOORALBYN/BEAUDESERT

Pam Elliott possumsplace@bigpond.com

DIARY DATES

FROG HABITAT SITE WORKING BEES

Bowman Park, Bardon
from 8-10.30am. April 5; June 7
Contact Phil or Jenny for more info

Grinstead Park, Alderley (off Shand St).
First Sunday every other month from 9-11.30am.
April 5; June 7
Contact Janet 3355 1884
janwhite@bigpond.net.au

Carseldine Bush Crew

First Saturday every month 8am-9.30am,
Meet where creek crosses Dorville Rd
ALL WELCOME
Contact James Hansen for more info
jamna@powerup.com.au/ 04278274433

QFS MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of month 7.30pm
Contact Jenny for venue **ALL WELCOME**

CITYSMART NEIGHBOURHOOD FAIRS

April 5th – Perrin Park, Josling St, Taringa
10am-1pm. QFS Display & sales.

Please note

The Diary Dates and Venues are also on the QFS web site which is constantly updated so please check between newsletters. Please let Jenny know of other suitable dates.

FROG CAMPS

Please ring Rod so that we know you're coming and for further details (eg bring water; camp cancelled) QNPWS camp fees apply (\$4.85/person/night) 14/3/09-15/03/09 Christmas Creek-Stinson Park camp area – Altitude frogs

FROG HABITAT BUSHCARE

Contact us if you are doing bushcare in Frog habitat and would like your working bees listed in diary dates

Most of the Co-ordinators now hold the "Frogs of Brisbane" Poster and you can pick up your FREE (to members) poster from them.

CO-ORDINATORS AWARENESS RAISING

Are there fairs or community events coming up in your areas? Why not put up the QFS display and do some froggy awareness raising? You don't have to be an expert on frog identification or anatomy to get people interested in frogs. Get in touch with Jenny to arrange picking up the display, brochures etc

SPONSORS

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QFS SCHOLARSHIPS

The QFS Trust Fund was created to help save frogs through education and research. It is now open to interested applicants. Two grants of \$1000 are available. The purpose of the grant is to assist research into Queensland's frogs. The form and grant conditions can be obtained on our website www.qldfrogs.asn.au.

The QFS Public Trust Fund balance now stands at \$8050.21 thanks to the generous donations from a member, Riverfest & Fred the donation bin.

NEW MEMBERS

Thomas Chester, Daniel Ferguson, Lyn Hatcher, Maureen Tottenham, Jacobs family, Hicks family, Dunnett family, Kuik family, Warrener-Edge family, Steve Wilson, Renee Catullo, Bronwyn Kelly,, Natalie Hill, Tim & Jodie Vinar, Maree Keay, Ludwig Ng, Rogers family, Kathryn Kerr, Juliet & Howard Parker, Danial Stratford, William Pawluczyk, Sam Pawluczyk, Dawn Pawluczyk, Natalie Gross, Candice Contencin-Clark, Sarah Bell



NEWS & HAPPENINGS

ASHGROVE

In my area the frogs have been fairly quiet but you still hear the striped marsh frog and tusked in the pools around the creeks.

Working bees at Bowman Park have been successful in keeping the weeds (mainly cobbler pegs) down and we have just planted over 100 plants to fill in gaps. The rains late November/December fill the drain and stayed long enough to allow some of the tadpoles to develop into frogs,

Judging by the phone calls and emails that I receive in the office, in some places the green treefrogs and sedges have spawned well which is good to hear.

Jenny Holdway

BRISBANE VALLEY

What a summer! With the highest rainfall in nearly a decade, the Brisbane Valley has literally exploded with frogs. It's difficult to know where to start, so I'll start at home. We have several dams within a few hundred metres of our place, and these have been the centre of loud choruses for several months. Species present around the dams include Green Tree Frogs (*Litoria caerulea*), Desert Tree frog (*Litoria rubella*), Emerald-spotted Tree Frog (*Litoria peronii*), Broad-palmed Frog (*Litoria latopalmata*), Dainty Tree Frog (*Litoria gracilentia*), Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog (*Litoria fallax*), Short-footed Frog (*Cyclorana brevipes*), Spotted Grass Frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*) and Dusky Toadlet (*Uperoleia fusca*). This is pretty typical assemblage of species around dams in the wider locality.

Ephemeral wetlands through the valley dominated by Queensland Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) carry a slightly different mix of species including Ornate Burrowing Frog (*Limnodynastes ornatus*), Scarlet-sided Pobblebonk (*Limnodynastes terrereginae*), Large Toadlet (*Pseudophryne major*), Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peroni*) and Eastern Sign-bearing Froglet (*Crinia parinsignifera*).

The Bleating Tree Frog (*Litoria dentata*) and Barking Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes fletcheri*) are also scattered through the valley, although in lesser numbers. I have only found the Barking Marsh Frog on one property at Toogoolawah. The Short-footed Frog was real surprise to me, having only recorded this species further west and north.

Speaking of west, I headed out to Dalby and Chinchilla during the big wet and was lucky enough to catch a few Holy Cross Toads (*Notaden bennettii*) and Waterholding Frogs (*Cyclorana platycephala*). These were a real treat!

Jason Richard

SUNSHINE COAST

A big hello to all froggy followers. What a fantastic froggy summer we have had here on the Sunny Coast. Hot, humid and wet. Just the way our friends like it.

I am pleased to introduce Wilson and Dunlop (as pictured). I think Dunlop is the frog with the spring in his step. Let me tell you the story of these 2 great guys. Over the Christmas school holidays my son was in contact, via email, with his friend Michelle that lives in Buderim. She was in a bit of a dilemma. With all the wet weather we had been having, the frogs had spawned in her mum's water fountain feature. What to do next, she wondered. Well, she just happened to mention this to my son, who of course has seen first hand how to look after and feed tadpoles. After much emailing back and forth, the frog spawn was moved to a clam shell pool and the feeding of lettuce leaves began. Since then I have been privy to some great frog photos from Michelle. I have since found out that Michelle has green tree frogs, eastern sedge frogs and tusked frogs at her place.

I must also tell you the story of Julie who also lives on Buderim. She sent me a couple of photos asking about her frogs emerging from the pond. All the frogs still had there tails intact. I figured it was due to the excellent hot, wet, humid weather we where having. They where all racing to get out of the tank and enjoy the great froggy conditions. If anyone else has a similar story could you please email me at espin@iinet.net.au and let me know.

Some time back I mentioned a proposed industrial site being built at Bridges. I did several frog walks in the area and found evidence of tusked frog spawn along the rocky creek bank. The good news is that the industrial site will not be going ahead.

In the last frog sheet I mentioned on how my frog pond came about. It has attracted a variety of different animals, lizards and birds to it. The latest addition has been a black snake. I have seen him 3 times shooting up the tulipwood tree that shades the frog pond. I bet he has a few frog stories of his own to tell. As I was mowing under this tree this morning I was contemplating a horror movie I saw last year. The movie was called "snakes on a plane", and as you can guess the cargo hold of the plane was housing a lot of varieties of snakes. The snakes did in fact get out of there hold and successfully made there way around the plane, terrorizing the passengers. I think I had better take my husbands advice and give up horror moves, as I could only think of the black snake falling out of the tree this morning as I was mowing. I have also noted over the past week a couple of kookaburras sitting on a low branch of the Tulipwood tree. I think they might have there sites set on the snake.

Another coup for our froggy population on the coast is the naming of a gully off Tulipwood Court at Montville. A fellow workmate informed me that the gully has recently been named "Gobbledeegook Gully" after a frog. I suggested to Margaret that maybe the name was "Pobblebonk Gully". She laughed and said yeah, I knew it was something like that. You can be sure I will be heading up that way in the near future to check it out for myself.

Hope to catch up with you in the future.

Cheers,

Trish Espin (Sunshine Coast)



Wallace & Dunlop



Mass exodus

Kroombit Tops FrogSearch 2009

During the first week of February a group of intrepid froggers (EPA staff and volunteers, lead by John Clarke and Harry Hines) headed for Kroombit Tops National Park, in the mountains behind Calliope (near Gladstone). FrogSearch has been an almost annual event over the last 12 years (or more!) to conduct research and monitoring of the frogs in the area, primarily focusing on the Kroombit tinkerfrog (*Taudactylus pleione*). As well as the frogs, we monitor the effectiveness of feral animal control as they destroy frog habitat and almost certainly spread chytrid fungus.

During the previous FrogSearch, in early 2008, we had an excellent year with more than 40 tinkerfrogs being recorded on a single stream (previous best was 13) and, more importantly, a gravid female observed interacting with a male (sadly no amplexus). This observation may seem trivial given you see this regularly in other species, but nothing is known about the breeding biology of the Kroombit tinkerfrog and there have only ever been a handful of females ever seen! The most exciting news from last year was the discovery, for the first time, of a sub-adult tinkerfrog. The excitement may seem a little odd, but this was the first time anyone had found absolute proof that the species is reproducing. Fabulous news!!

This year we arrived at the Kroombit barracks, in cloud and misty rain (promising if you're a frog!), and promptly took over the barracks and turned them into a frog base, later to be draped in smelly, muddy, blood covered (the leeches at Kroombit are amazingly large critters!) clothes and froggers! Many thanks must go to the Rangers who graciously gave up their space.

Team leaders ventured out on the first night to assess the tinkerfrog calling activity from listening points scattered along the escarpment, while John lazed back at camp inducting the volunteers. The tinkerfrog has a distinctive, bell-like 'tink' call, which carries well, so can be easily heard from vantage points along the escarpment. Over the following nights small teams crashed (some streams are very overgrown with lantana, raspberry and a myriad of other spiky plants!) their way through a mixture of stream censuses and listening points, both off the escarpment and on the plateau, where the tinkerfrogs were originally discovered. Teams also conducted observations of calling males and detailed searches of the surrounding habitat to locate eggs, tadpoles and frogs.

After a massive effort, the good news is that we detected tinkerfrogs in most of the sites off the escarpment, where they were previously known to occur. The tinkerfrogs on the plateau have shown the most dramatic and alarming declines with good numbers being found in the mid 90s in several of the streams. Unfortunately, even with the increased effort, we now rarely detect them on the plateau (none this year and only one last year).

The other great news is that the efforts in controlling feral animals, by the Rangers, appears to be paying off, especially off the escarpment where visible damage has been significantly reduced. There has however been a declining rainfall for the past 25 years and we're now starting to see some of the results of this – dry waterholes and springs and disappearing ground water. The critically endangered (by IUCN criteria) tinkerfrog could lose half its habitat and have a reduced breeding season due to these climatic changes.

The trip wasn't just about tinkerfrogs though, with numerous other stream and pond dwelling frogs also keeping the froggers entertained. Some of the species seen include the tusked frog (*Adelotus brevis*), striped marshfrog (*Limnodynastes peronii*), spotted grassfrog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*), scarlet sided pobblebonk (*Limnodynastes terraereginae*), ornate burrowing frog (*Platyplectrum ornatum*), clicking froglet (*Crinia signifera*), great barred frog (*Mixophyes fasciolatus*), copper backed broodfrog (*Pseudophryne raveni*), common green treefrog (*Litoria caerulea*), orange eyed treefrog (*Litoria chloris*), eastern sedgefrog (*Litoria fallax*), broad palmed rocketfrog (*Litoria latopalmata*), Kroombit Tops cascade treefrog (*Litoria pearsoniana* – *Kroombit Tops*) – probably a separate cascade treefrog species that is only found in Kroombit, the emerald spotted treefrog (*Litoria peronii*), naked treefrog (*Litoria rubella*), and the eastern stoney creek frog (*Litoria wilcoxii*). It didn't just stop at frogs either – the diversity of animals and plants at Kroombit never ceases to amaze, with far too many species to mention here!

Overall, the results from the tinkerfrog surveys over the last couple of years are promising with good indications that the original population estimates of 150 to 300 adults is certainly an underestimate - this combined with the knowledge that they are actually reproducing means that they will be around into the future, especially given the dedicated frog researchers who refuse to give up. The discovery of eggs and tadpoles eluded us once more – perhaps next year!

Dan Ferguson
Ecologist with EPA



Adult male Kroombit tinkerfrog. Photo: Ed Meyer



Gravid female Kroombit tinkerfrog. Photo Eridani Mulder



FrogSearch 2009 team outside the Kroombit barracks.



Juvenile(sub-adult) Kroombit tinkerfrog. Photo: Harry Hines

Frogs of the Solomon Islands (continued from page 1):

The Solomon Islands are certainly an amazing country of immense conservation value. Sadly, there is an urgent need to prevent some of the serious pressures (such as clear-fell logging by foreign companies) before they diminish this value.

If you'd like to read more about Solomon Islands frogs go to: http://www.ruffordsmallgrants.org/rsg/projects/patrick_pikacha

Thanks to Patrick Pikacha for identifying the frogs!

Tyrone Lavery

Presidents report:

OK when is Autumn s'posed to start? I have never really been one to categorise the weather but it certainly is dictating our lives at present. It seems that the relative stability in Brisbane and SEQ is going to make this area a more desirable place for Australians to live. As a frogger (a sailor and a motorbike rider), it does seem logical that I should be very aware of what the skies are doing, but like most people unless I keep a diary my memory is fuzzy about these things and I really only remember the weather in terms of frog breeding events.

At our last management meeting the discussion turned to our Brisbane frog emblem, the Graceful treefrog (*Litoria gracilentia*). It appeared that of the 6 members there three of us had noted the decline of breeding and calling of these species in their backyards and locality over the last 3-4 years. Now is this a natural behavior change or are we seeing a gradual disappearance of this species over the Brisbane region?? So I am very interest in what our observant members out there have to say. Please email me if you have had or know or graceful treefrog sites and whether you agree they seem to have declined or is it they are simply adjusting their breeding habits with natural variations in climate?

My personal story is this, when I moved into my property at Wynnum Manly 12 years ago, it had a lot of trees – weed trees mainly. In fact there were only three native trees on the whole ¼ acre block. Progressively over the years we removed the chinese elm forest, the crepe myrtles, the pines and the queen palms – all dreadfully invasive species. We replace them with a suite of native, as the canopy has changed by gradually. The tree filled nature of the garden attracts predators and we have always had at least one tree snake spotted regularly over the 12 years. There were always graceful treefrogs you could hear calling on summer nights (the particularly liked the old mango on the footpath and the flindersias) and they bred at least once each year, once we established an ephemeral pond area in the garden. However, the last three years I have had to strain my ear to hear may calls. One year I did not hear any calls at all. They have tried to breed in the two years previous to 2008 but the egg quality was poor and the tadpoles had poor survival. They may have sneaked into one of the larger ponds but none of the tadpoles were observed. This year I have heard the most calls for a while, no breeding activity (the sometimes bred as late as February here) BUT they did breed very successfully at a local park. Gracefuls will breed in anything when the conditions are right, but what are the right conditions??

There is so much we don't know even about the most common frogs. The big greens have also moved on but I hear them calling from my neighbours three doors up. I am happy to know that they are still around in increasing numbers even though they seem to prefer his ponds to mine. The *L. caerulea* are an open woodland species by nature, are know to disperse over time and no doubt can forage over wide areas. Establishment of a metapopulation structure (a series of linked breeding populations) is more beneficial to long term survival and I only ever talk with that neighbor about the frogs, so it has helped forge some community interaction.

Last but not least the 28th of April has been promoted as a SAVE the Frogs day. We have posted details on our website. There are camps and green days coming up, as well as frog habitat working bees. Like many of you, I am looking forward to things slowing down a little and the cooler months.

Pearl Symonds



In the good old days when the gold coloured metamorphs hung around on plant leaves in their dozens.

Frog Camp to Girraween National Park Friday 30 Jan to Sun 1 Feb

Girraween NP is at 900 metres above sea level some 20 kms south of Stanthorpe. We arrived on Friday afternoon to a very quiet camp ground, set up camp and went for an afternoon walk along Bald Rock Creek. The whole area was lush with new growth, after the late December rains, but not a frog to be heard. Our first find was a single Eastern Sedge Frog (*Litoria fallax*) along the track above the creek. We returned after dark, and wandered the creek with its huge boulders, large deep craters, some filled with water, but no frog activity. Later Rod explored further up the creek and discovered a Broad-palmed Rocketfrog (*L. latopalmata*) and a Stony-creek frog (*L. wilcoxii*) which had just eaten another frog.

On the Saturday we talked with the Ranger and checked the frog species list for the Park. The sites he mentioned seemed promising and with light showers during the day, we set off to explore several great frog habitats. At a large dam partly surrounded by a swamp we spotted 2 Clicking Froglets (*Crinia signifera*) and heard many Beeping Froglets (*C. parinsignifera*). Further on at another very large wet area we again heard the froglets. The Striped Marshfrog (*Limnodynastes peronii*) were in abundance, and we saw a few more sedgie's.

We also heard a Copper-backed (*Pseudophryne raveni*) or a Red-backed Broodfrog (*P. coriacea*) calling. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate one to identify it. Later, back at the creek we got close to several Stony-creek male frogs calling with some interested females nearby.

It was the first time I had visited the Girraween N P and found the massive rocks, some in precarious positions a true delight. The walk to the top of the Pyramid was a bit beyond my reach, but Rod did it in style and took a photo of himself standing in front of Balancing Rock near the top of the mountain.

We enjoyed the beautiful environment and its wildlife. It would be great to see new people at the frog camps and to get to know them and share our knowledge and experiences with others, especially over some cool refreshments.

Janece Eckhardt

I'm looking forward to the next two frog camps; firstly at Harry's Hut Noosa River on 21-22 Feb, and especially the camp on 14-15 Mar at Christmas Creek-Stinson Park. I haven't been to this area before.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

Hello everyone and welcome to 2009. The rain has come again with a vengeance this time. For some, especially the folks up north not so welcome.

Our thoughts also go to our Victorian "cousins" who have been affected by the bushfires, in particular those who have lost loved ones, their homes, pets, businesses and livestock/property. It has also proved to be quite horrific for our wildlife. Wildlife Victoria are working hard to save as many as they can.

My frog pond is now close to full. It had been a bit of a battle to keep the water in there to help the remaining tadpoles from the last laying stay alive. The evaporation during the Summer months was quite bad. At the moment have quite a few tadpoles (and worse yet, some "toadpoles" too I think). These are some of the species that have visited and/or stayed and made their home there – Eastern Sedgefrog (*Litoria fallax*) – can always rely on these to lay; Ornate Burrowing Frog (*Platyplectrum ornatus*) – **please note the name change**; Scarlet-sided Pobblebonk (*Limnodynastes terrareginae*) – love that bonking sound; Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peronii*); Dainty Tree Frog (*Litoria gracilentia*); Green Tree Frogs (*Litoria caerulea*) – old faithful; Red-eyed Tree frog (*Litoria chloris*);

Roths Tree Frog (*Litoria rothii*) – I have found these to be the master of disguise, as well as the occasional Keelback (*Tropidonophis mairi*). This is a freshwater snake that loves frogs and tadpoles. Caught one two nights ago that was on the large size and had to relocate it (I think I have given John a few extra grey hairs over the years doing this).

I had the good fortune to be in Melbourne during the Australia Day weekend and visited the Melbourne Aquarium, Melbourne Zoo, the Penguins at Phillip Island and Werribee Open Range Zoo. The Melbourne Zoo have a Frog display which features Stuttering Barred Frogs (*Mixophyes balbus*), Blue Mountains Tree Frogs (*Litoria citropa*), Rocky River Tree Frogs (I think these are Stony-creek), Growling Grass Frogs (*Litoria raniformis*), Eastern Dwarf Tree Frogs (*Litoria fallax*) (they're everywhere) and also Blue & Gold Poison Frogs.

Just a couple of photos of my frog pond which looks great when it's full.



Articles for next issue by 22nd May 2009 please.

"Til next time

Naomi



*Dedicated to a
better Brisbane*

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Frogsheet – AUTUMN 2009
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Design-a-frog competition



Scales!

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★ Read on to find out how!

- ★ Pick any kind of frog as the base, imagine a new environment, and add adaptations (eg. wings, can breath fire, scales, ect.) You must:
- ★ Draw your new-and-improved frog BY YOURSELF. The competition will not be judged on drawing skill.
- ★ Include a small paragraph on where the frog lives and how it's changes help it to survive in it's habitat. Also include what it eats, defences, and size. Maybe it lives on the moon!
- ★ Prizes: 1st place gets a ticket for up to 2 adults and 4 kids to David Fleay Wildlife Park valid until 30 June 2009!! 3 runners-up will get a window sticker and jigsaw puzzle.
- ★ Entries due by: 15th April 2009. Send to _____ (somewhere that it can be posted to PO Box 45, Ballandean, 4382 from)