

# FrogSheet

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## **FROM THE PRESIDENT - Ric Natrass**

Help! On the 23 March at Brisbane Forest Park Headquarters at The Gap, the Society is holding a 'Think Tank' session. Secretary Jenny Holdway has mentioned this in the last newsletter, but unfortunately we have been really under-whelmed by members wishing to participate. The relatively low attendance at last year's symposium had the Management Committee wondering whether we were heading in the right direction and just what else we could do to re-ignite people's concern for the future of frogs. With six species of Queensland frogs having recently disappeared forever from the face of the planet, the past 20 years or so has been one of the worst periods of vertebrate extinction in the last 200. Thanks to Professor Rick Speare of James Cook University, we now know how it happened. He told us at the October symposium. The threat is still there. The Queensland Frog Society can help, but we need a bit of membership input. If you've got ideas/opinions on what the Society might do, ring Jenny Holdway now on 3366 1868 to reserve yourself a chair at the Think Tank day. All will be heard. Now for a bit of good news. After one of the longest dry spells in recent times (at least in my part of the world) the rain has come and everywhere I go I hear the invitations of the males for the females to join them in the water. Music!

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### **CENTRAL QUEENSLAND**

Thanks to the beautiful rain we have had up here, I now have something to share. Rainfall reports around the Gladstone/Calliope districts in the week of the 3rd February were between about 500mm and 735mm. Most of this rain fell in a couple of days, causing some flooding. My children (10 & 11), and many others their ages have never seen flooding, so this has been very exciting (makes you remember and appreciate the simple pleasure of playing in the rain).

Two weeks after all that beautiful rain, a trip to Kroombit Tops was definitely in order. The

kids and I headed up there in the morning, admiring the flowing creeks as we went. After setting up camp, swimming and exploring our immediate surroundings, it was time to wander elsewhere. The rumble of thunder in the distance was no threat to us, so like any self-respecting frogger we donned our head torches and headed for a creek. Some nice gentle rain made for excellent froggin`.

The calls of Great barred frogs (*Mixophyes fasciolatus*) were deafening, not to mention having to be careful where you put your feet. Cascade treefrogs (*Litoria pearsoniana*) were also present along with Tusked frogs (*Adelotus brevis*), Emerald-spotted treefrogs (*Litoria peronii*), Southern orange-eyed treefrog (*Litoria chloris*), Stony-creek frog (*Litoria lesueuri*), Striped rocketfrog (*Litoria nasuta*), and a Brown-striped marshfrog (*Limnodynastes peronii*).

The onset of heavy fog sent us reluctantly back to camp only to find it also alive with the call of *fasciolatus*. A little more froggin` before the therapeutic call of frogs lulled us to sleep (special thanks must go to the fasc that took up residence at our tent).

Drizzly morning rain was not going to prohibit a bit of exploring to see if the previous night's activities were fruitful. Delighted with the findings, we returned to camp for morning tea and to seek refuge from the drizzle that had turned to rain. Upon deciding that the rain could set in, we packed up our camp and headed for home, oblivious to the amount of rain that had fallen down the road. Hey! There are worse places to be stranded.

Here's to a good season Jodi

## **ASHGROVE**

I would have to say that this dry summer has really made for a quiet one especially for the treefrogs. The Striped Marsh, Tusked and Eastern Sedge have been calling in this area, but that is due to permanent ponds. The last rains brought 100mm in my area and the big greens all came out in force which resulted in buckets of spawn and the Gracefuls made some attempt to call, but that is all.

I will clarify the buckets of spawn – I put out buckets to catch all the rainwater I can and, although I have an aboveground pond where the treefrogs do spawn, these big greens always make for the buckets. Well, you can't please everyone all the time.

School talks in the area have started and this means getting the message out to a new group of children – wonderful.

Hope to see some of you at our displays – please make yourself know to us.

Jenny Holdway

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## **Lockyer Valley Report.**

My name is Lawrence Pearce and I am the new area co-ordinator for the Lockyer Valley. Some of the species of frogs in the area are: Green treefrog, Eastern Sedgefrog, Scarlet-sided Pobblebonk, Striped Marshfrog, Striped Rocketfrog, Emerald-spotted Treefrog, Naked Treefrog, Broad-palmed rocketfrog, Ornate Burrowing Frog and a frog that I spotted 2 years ago, but vanished only to show up again very recently, the Greenstripe Frog. I thought that I would never see them again as it has been 2 years since last they visited my pond. He or she is only small but will grow with time and I hope a few of his brothers or sisters hop by as well. If anyone/members in the Lockyer Valley needs any help with identification of a frog or any enquiry at all please contact me day or night (not too late) and if anyone needs ideas on how to build a frog pond or would like to look at mine, just give me a ring.

The drought has been hard out here, plus with water restrictions for a short time it was looking grim, but a little rain and the odd storm and hey presto the chorus starts singing, but

not in my pond. They all go charging over to the neighbour's place to his dam that has 3 inches of muddy, smelly water in it. That's life!

A friend asked me how I knew the different frogs and how to spot them. I told them, "It's easy - I go camping with the QFS when they have field trips." I would like to take this opportunity to tell all our members about some of the field trips my wife and I have done. At first I couldn't tell what frog was what or what was calling in the distance, but we as members are so lucky to have some people like Rod Pattison, Stefan Durtschi and Rob Morgan. These guys are a wealth of information and they love to share it and it's not only frogs. They catch fresh water fish and reptiles, spot birds and all matter of animals. Just last trip while at Lamington I saw the biggest eel I have ever seen, then 5 minutes later stepped on one (smaller than goodness) and scared 10 years out of myself. Maybe you are not that crazy about frogs. That's OK - the field trips are great to just sit around and chat - lots of kids come and wives and girlfriends too. So if you have always wanted to see the bush and the amazing creatures that live in it then come on the next field trip. You will have a ball - I guarantee it.

Lawrence Pearce PS

Ring Rod or Stefan and they will tell you how to get there!

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### **From Itai in Israel.....**

Last year I put in an article from a young man from Israel who was very concerned about the plight of frogs world wide and especially the species in Israel and wanted to help the Qld. Frog Society. Itai has continued to email me with what he has been doing and I am pleased to say that he has gained entry into an Israeli University to do Environmental Studies. He was, however, very upset to see that the University collects hundreds of frogs for "research" and at a meeting with the Dean, told him so. This is the latest email I have received from him and as you can see he is still having his ups and downs.

"Dear Jenny, Hope you're doing well. Finally some good news... The University accepted the alternatives and NO MORE frogs and other animal beings are to enter Tel-Hai college for scientific experiments ever again. I have even heard from Dr. Jane Goodall and she was so thrilled, immediately saying that she'll spread this small victory throughout the school/University systems of the world. Breathtaking and overwhelming indeed.

A grave tragedy has struck us — three wetland frog habitats were destroyed by tractors last week for various development purposes (all of them useless i.e' parking lots, garbage dumps and dirt roads). The Spadefooted frog lived almost only in these areas, and now she's on the very very verge of extinction. So after my friend from the Tel-Aviv Uni. published an article about this tragedy in the newspapers I came up with the idea of establishing an "Israel Frog Society" under "Roots & Shoots-Israel". I haven't stopped crying all last weekend and I felt so weak. The only Spadefoot frog I found at the scenes had its eye damaged and she was probably thrown by a tractor. I think it will be best if I call you to talk about this matter more in detail as writing this down is very painful for me. I'll call you in a few days if that's alright.

Have a beautiful New Year filled with love, peace, hope and a brighter future!

Love, Itai

P.S. I can't find the words to thank you for all your friendship and spirit lifting support, thank you!"

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### **TRUST FUND:**

Trust Fund Balance as at March 2003 is \$ 3,5898.85

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## Frogging in Broome and North-West Australia

During 2002, while managing the Broome Bird Observatory, I took as many opportunities as possible to seek out the frogs of Broome. Being a remote area, I have put together the following article to provide other 'froggers' with an insight into what they might see by visiting the area, as well as aid in adding a few ticks to the list.

With an average rainfall of about 600mm, Broome is hardly an area where frogs are abundant year round. Most of the rain falls from January-March. During the build up, some of the Hylids start to become active, calling, hanging around lights, and feasting on insects that also become more abundant with the rising in humidity. Other than this, the keen frogger will need to be present during the rain to see some of the fantastic frogs of the area. A handy hint to finding some species is to check toilet cisterns anywhere you go and don't be deterred by the strange looks you get when you walk out of the women's toilet.

Below is an annotated list of the frogs of the Broome area that I saw. I have also listed other species that I am told are present but I did not see. On top of this, some books list other species that I never saw or heard mentioned. There were only a couple of other people in the area that had a partial interest in frogs, as most of them were birders at heart. Species were identified using 'A Field Guide to Australian Frogs' by Barker, Grigg and Tyler. If anyone is visiting WA, the WA Museum has published a book called 'Frogs of Western Australia'. My only criticism of this is that the distribution maps are inaccurate and cannot be relied upon for up-to-date information. Besides this, the photos and information are quite good.

*Litoria caerulea* - Common throughout Broome and easily seen year round. Common in toilets, guttering and damp areas.

*Litoria nasuta* - Found in grassy areas in and around Broome where water lies after rain. Abundant locally in restricted areas.

*Litoria rothii* - Sparsely spread throughout the Broome area and most often found where permanent water exists, such as wetlands and ponds and toilet cisterns. Became active in October and called throughout the wet.

*Litoria rubella* - Probably the most common frog in Broome. Present in similar areas to that of *L.caerulea*, but more common in gardens where small hollows and cracks exist.

*Cyclorana australis* - Commonly seen after the first rains. Present along roadsides and where puddles of water lie and feeding on lawns where sprinklers are active. In between rain periods when it became dry again, I noticed one sitting where a tap was slowly dripping on a nightly basis.

*Cylorana longipes* - Common near roadside puddles after rain and any similar area. Required more rainfall than *C. australis* before it was present. *Limnodynastes ornatus* - Common in roadside drains and puddles after rain but not as abundant as *C. longipes* and appeared about the same time after decent rainfall.

*Notaden nichollsi* - Locally common-uncommon after heavy rains. First appeared in the observatory grounds after about 100mm of rain in about 2 days. Easily seen during wet periods where large soaks of water appear. Can be seen along roadside puddles as well.

Other Species -*Uperolia aspera* and *Cyclorana vagitus* were the only other two species that I was told people had seen in Broome in the past however I cannot confirm these. I heard other reports of species people found but could not identify and so they remain a mystery. South of Broome at Anna Plains I found *Uperolia russelli* (a real bonus). At Bell Gorge I saw *Crinia bilingua* (present near the top of the falls in the small stream that the track runs alongside) and *Litoria coplandi* (amongst the cracks in the rocks surrounding the swimming hole at the

base of the falls). Both these species were seen in May.

During January I travelled from Broome to Cairns and of interest found *Limnodynastes convexiusculus* at Mataranka Springs in the NT, and *Cyclorana maini* at Cammoweal in Qld. Mild flooding was present in both areas.

It is probably important to remember that Western Australia is a huge state and there is no doubt a lot to be learned about the amphibians that exist there. Many of the areas where frogs occur are inaccessible during the wet and so I believe a few species are probably yet to be discovered. Photos and further information can be obtained by contacting me by e-mail if necessary - [carliagrace@yahoo.com](mailto:carliagrace@yahoo.com). Frog on!

Dan is a new member and we thank him for his contribution to the Frogsheet.

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### **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 algacides 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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### **Save the Frogs before they Croak**

Ranger Diary with Stella Martin The Cairns Post Outdoor Passport, November 1, 2002

Frog Week begins tomorrow. Unfortunately our frogs have been suffering recently due to a combination of drought conditions and disease.

The dry season is normally a stressful time for frogs but, when the wet season starts, they usually regain good condition as breeding insects provide abundant food.

However, the lack of a wet season this year created a food shortage with other animals, such as insectivorous bats, birds, reptiles and toads, competing for the same resource.

The frogs also had problems breeding. With erratic weather conditions, although male frogs found breeding sites, females often did not turn up. Those frogs that did manage to spawn, often lost their tadpoles as pools of water dried up prematurely. The few tadpoles that reached the frog stage found too little food to sustain them with many of them falling prey to other hungry animals, including adult frogs and desiccation.

Already weakened by a poor wet season and faced with a record dry spell, the frogs have become very susceptible to diseases. A new disease has recently been identified in Cairns frogs and is taking its toll. Originally suspected to be the chytrid fungus, which has wiped out species around the globe, tests revealed it to be another fungus, *mucor amphibiorum*. This outbreak has been blamed on the drought, with frogs living on sandy soils particularly badly affected.

Another disease, which has been reducing local frog numbers for several years, is caused by a parasitic tapeworm, which reproduces inside cats. Its eggs are deposited in the cat's faeces and are then picked up by insects, which are eaten by frogs, or simply stick to the frog's skin. Once the frog has been infected the eggs hatch and the worms migrate around the body gradually weakening and killing it.

To prevent this disease from spreading, cat owners are asked to worm their cats regularly. It is necessary to give the cat four times the normal dose recommended on the package to kill this particular tapeworm. It is also important to clean up cat droppings and adjacent soils as quickly as possible.

The Cairns Frog Hospital is doing its best to cure sick frogs and asks the public to bring in any sick frogs they find at the first sign that something is wrong. Usually the first sign is a tendency for the frog to sit out in an exposed spot during the day. Other symptoms can include thinness, discolouration, lesions, lumps or abscesses in the skin and weakness.

If you see an injured or sick frog with two or more of these symptoms, call the Cairns Frog Hospital on 4053 4367 or 0418 152 199 afternoons or evenings. Similarly, if you want more information on frog diseases, contact the Frog Hospital or visit the website [www.fdrproject.org.au](http://www.fdrproject.org.au)

Stella Martin is with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Taken from The Croaker, Newsletter of the Tablelands Frog Club Inc. Vol. 7, No.10 (November-December 2002).

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## **Do the Right Thing**

As the frog-watching season is beginning, it is an appropriate time to remind all froggers of the correct procedures when handling our amphibian mates. The following is an Extract from **NatureSearch Standard Operating Procedures**.

Jenny Clarke

### **Frogs**

General Frogs are vulnerable to dehydration, extremes of temperature and potentially fatal diseases, such as chytridiomycosis. Care will be exercised to ensure that frogs, which void their bladder as a capture response, especially during daytime searches, will be allowed to rehydrate in an appropriate container of clean water prior to release. All prolonged confinement of frogs will be in circumstances where the ambient temperature range is between 12 and 25 degrees C. Frogs will be protected from possible disease transfer by the use of light plastic food-handling gloves or similar equipment, and in sensitive areas, gloves will be changed when moving significant distances or moving from one stream channel to another.

Containers, gloves, rubber boots and bags used in the capture, handling and confinement of frogs will be rinsed with household bleach after each use or will not be reused. Mud and other deposits adhering to footwear will be scraped off and doused with bleach before being reused in another location.

## **Capture**

Capture of frogs will be by hand capture or by pitfall trapping. Occasionally frogs are captured in cage traps (Elliott or similar) set for other species.

## **Handling and Confinement**

Frogs will be restrained in the hand by immobilisation of the hind legs, both held simultaneously fully extended and parallel. Confinement of frogs will be in lightly inflated plastic bags containing an appropriate amount of water from which the frog was taken or in wet cloth bags.

## **Transportation**

Transportation of frogs will be in the containers used for confinement and only in circumstances where the ambient temperature is between 12 and 25 degrees C.

## **Release**

Unless otherwise approved by an appropriate conservation officer, all frogs will be released at the point of capture following identification. Where daytime release cannot be avoided, care will be taken to ensure that frogs are not subjected to predation by releasing into dense vegetation and preferably in or close to the nearest body of water.

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## **Frogs take a bath for survival**

Media Release - Ref 2003/13 - Feb 03 , 2003

A special 'bath' to detect frogs infected with the chytrid fungus - one of the worst killers of frogs - has been concocted by CSIRO researchers.

Dr Alex Hyatt, CSIRO Livestock Industries, says the simple bath is just one strategy in an international effort to reverse the world-wide decline of frogs. "Frogs are part of our rich biodiversity and have been disappearing over the past decade," says Dr Hyatt. "If we can understand the mechanisms by which frogs disappear, we may have a greater chance of saving frogs and indeed other animals." Dr Hyatt is leading a team of scientists at CSIRO's Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) in Geelong, focused on developing tests for the fungus. The team works closely with Mr Gerry Marantelli, a leading frog researcher who has converted his Melbourne home into a research centre.

"We've developed the bath and a range of simple tests that can detect the fungus on frogs. Some of these tests will be used in future work to detect the fungus in the environment," Dr Hyatt says. "These tests are trialled by Gerry and his team at the Amphibian Research Centre." Mr Marantelli says that without assistance, many frog species will be gone in a few short years. "The tests will help Australian frogs - like the highly endangered southern corroboree - to combat the fungus," Mr Marantelli says. "If we know where the fungus is in the environment we can ensure we don't release susceptible frogs into that area. We can also determine how well our anti-fungal treatments are working."

The test development is just one part of the project that involves researchers from Australia, the United States and Canada. The team is looking at the disease in total - not just the animals that are infected. "Such an approach is needed if we are to develop effective management strategies for the fungus," Dr Hyatt says.

“Information gathered from the field and the laboratory will be used by modelers in an effort to identify fungus ‘hot spots’ - areas where the fungus is likely to have a devastating effect. Identification of these areas will allow us to employ management strategies such as ensuring endangered species are not released into contaminated areas, effectively reducing the impact of the disease.”

The chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) was first identified in 1998. It is believed to have been a major contributing factor in the extinction of eight species of frogs. The chytrid fungus has been detected on more than 100 species of frogs in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Central America.

More information: Dr Alex Hyatt, CSIRO, 0352275419 Email: alex.hyatt@csiro.au Mr Gerry Marantelli, Amphibian Research Centre, 03 9354 4718

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### **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**