

Official Newsletter of the Queensland Frog Society Inc

Spring 2008

'Iwona'
Mitchell, 4465
20/6/08

Greetings Froggers (and frogs)

In light of the regular mention of Cane Toads in the Frog sheets, there is a point we are all missing. We humans are big on slinging abuse and violence at what we call Feral or Pest Animals – everything from cane toads to camels – but we seem to be blind to the fact that we are a VERY destructive, introduced species ourselves! That means ALL of us, whether we got off the plane yesterday or our ancestors arrived 45,000 plus years ago. We have all made our fair share of change to this country in which no primate species evolved naturally. Food for thought isn't it?

May your creeks and frog ponds be always full.

Best wishes

Elizabeth Gearey

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FROGSHEET BY EMAIL

We can send the Frog sheet 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 qldfrogs@bigpond.net.au stating your preference

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DIARY DATES

FROG HABITAT SITE WORKING BEES

Bowman Park, Bardon
from 8-10.30am. Oct 12, Dec 7
Contact Phil or Jenny for more info

Grinstead Park, Alderley (off Shand St).

First Sunday every other month from 9-11.30am.
Oct 5, Dec 7.
Contact Janet 3355 1884
janwhite@bigpond.net.au

Carseldine Bush Crew

First Saturday every month 8am-9.30am- Oct 5
Nov 1, Meet where creek crosses
Dorville Rd. ALL WELCOME
Contact James Hansen for more info
jamna@powerup.com.au 04278274433

Oct 4 – QFS Beginners ID Workshop. Particularly
for new members but all welcome. RGS room
237 Milton Rd, Milton. Starts at 1.30. Please RSVP
by Sept 26.

Oct 12 – Mooloolah ID Workshop. Phone Jan 5494 7653
to book

Nov 16 – QFS Meeting held at Indigiscapes, 17
Runnymede Rd Capalaba. 10am-12 noon. Talk by
Ed Meyer

Nov 22 – QFS Family Afternoon at Alma Park Zoo - FREE
(see page 3 for details)

QFS MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of month 7.30pm
Contact Jenny for venue. Oct 15, Nov 19
ALL WELCOME



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

QFS SCHOLARSHIPS

The QFS Trust Fund was created to help save frogs through education and research. We hope the first grant for amphibian research will be available for the beginning of 2009. If you are interested please contact QFS.

The QFS Public Trust Fund balance now stands at \$7057.26

NEW MEMBERS

Scott Emerson, Helen Coleman, Alison Morris, Pamela Elliott, Michael Brophy and the Windle Family

The colour heading on the Frogsheet has been

kindly printed free of charge by
ASCOT PRINT & DESIGN P/L

AN EVENING AT ALMA PARK ZOO

F R E E

November 22nd

The manager has invited the Queensland Frog Society to a sausage sizzle and spotlight at Alma Park Zoo and it is Free to all our members young and old.

Starts at 3pm so you will have sometime to look at the animals before something to eat then a spotlight walk looking for local frogs which hasn't been done before.

Please show your membership card to the person at the gate. As this is our last outing for the year, it is a nice way to wish you all Happy Christmas.

BRING A TORCH

Got A Green Spot?

This is just a gentle reminder that your membership is due and that this might be your last Frogsheet. Please ignore this reminder if you have posted your renewal recently. The Society values your support and it's only through membership numbers that we can continue the work to help our native frogs.

Thank you to the members who have renewed.

Fauna of Australia 2A Amphibia and Reptilia is available online at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/publications/fauna-of-australia/fauna-2a.html>.

You can download the whole book or the chapters you are interested in.

Blurb from new president - Pearl:

It was a stalwart dozen of QFS members who performed their duty at the AGM on Saturday 13th and saw the new executive team sworn in. Thank you all for turning up and to those who enjoyed a meal at the Thai restaurant afterwards. I met some new faces and caught up with some not so old ones from the past. Being one of those “working mums” from the suburban “Aussie battler” zone and trying to complete a PhD I was wondering what the hell am I doing taking on another role, but someone has to do it- and I’m doing it for the frogs.

Becoming a “president” unfortunately does not immediately confer a godlike status of all knowing and all seeing as some other (American) presidents might believe. So I am going to need a lot of help in this job. I am very pleased to see some new blood (Julia and Anne) join us as vice presidents and look forward to their involvement. As I said before the executive is a team and we need to represent the views and philosophies of our members so please don’t hesitate if you are a member to come along to an executive meeting or simply email us and let us know what is going on frogwise in your part of town.

I’m very excited by the fact that we will have a new look website coming online (a legacy of Janet White’s presidency) that will enhance communication between our members and any other frog inclined folk. There has been a lot of interest in frogs this year thanks to someone declaring 2008 as year of the frog along with year of the scout and the Chinese year of the rat.

There are some important dates coming up: the beginners ID workshop, a family day at Alma park (free entry to members), and a Southside meeting at Indigiscapes where we have the illustrious Ed Meyer speaking. More than ever species diversity on this planet is at the mercy of one (homosapiens) and more than ever we have a responsibility to all other living things to provide a quality of existence they are entitled to.

At the AGM we were delighted to make Jenny Holdway and Rod Pattison Honorary Life Members of the Queensland Frog Society.

Jenny has been a member of the society for 16 years and has served on the committee for 11 years. That would describe only a fraction of the work she has done for frogs giving her time generously with numerous talks, school visits and radio interviews in addition to her secretarial workload, which keeps the society functioning.

Rod has been a member of the society for 10 years and has served on the committee as President and Vice President since 2000. He has arranged all our camps for the last 7 years, given identification workshops to many organisations and been a passionate ambassador for frogs.

Well done Jenny and Rod.
They join Honorary Life Members Ruth Wait and Ric Nattrass.

Ruth has been a member of the society for 17 years and served on the committee for four years as President and Vice-president. She was instrumental in the early days of the society in setting up the program of activities such as school visits and displays, initiated the idea of area co-ordinators and wrote a booklet on the care of injured frogs.

Ric is a founding member of the society and served as President for 4 years and Treasurer for 3 years. Over the past 19 years, Ric has helped to raise the profile of native amphibians through workshops, talks, displays and brochures and in 1999 instigated the “Frogs in the Community” symposium.

From the outgoing President

We have had a busy and challenging 12 months. Challenging, because on top of our regular activities we promoted our own version of the Year of the Frog with our successful Leap Day BBQ, YOTF T-shirt and talk by Harry Hines as well as production of new display materials and creation of the new website.

We've set the wheels in motion for the disbursement of scholarships from the Trust Fund. It will be a healthy sign for the society when there is less in the trust fund account but more projects underway, surveys taking place and data being collected.

With the help of members we have continued to foster awareness and educate about frogs with a packed schedule of camps, working bees at our habitat site, attendance at fairs, fetes and green days, frog id and frog-friendly garden workshops and talks, the Frogsheet, visiting schools and advising on everything from frogs that live in cars and won't leave to frog displays in tourist attractions.

Compared to our stated aims

- *to encourage and foster an interest in frogs*
- *to provide expert assistance and education for newcomers*
- *to undertake a continuous survey of the local native species to determine their relative abundance and distribution*

we have addressed the first two with tremendous energy but neglected the last.

I hope the improved communication between co-ordinators and members, flowing from the new website admin system, will make it easier to arrange surveys and spur-of-the-moment frogspotting when the weather is right.

Given the crisis frogs are suffering – the effect of chytrid and habitat loss from development and climate change – it is important to keep a close eye on how our froggy friends are doing. The rediscovery of the Armoured Mist Frog at Port Douglas announced last week shows how important it is to have folk out in the field frogspotting.

Being a small team we need to conserve energy. I think we need to re-examine our aims. Are they what we want to achieve and do they reflect what we do? For example, how does our work at Bowman Park fit into these aims? Or our attempts to protect the *Litoria brevipalmata* colony at Joyner? If working to promote conservation and restoration of habitat is important should it be written in our aims.

I think it would be useful to make a strategic plan – with a facilitator such as Mark Creighton from Volunteering Queensland to assist us – so we have less of a scatter-gun approach where we try to do everything, which is frankly exhausting.

Overall, it is an exciting time to be in the society – it is in sound financial shape, we have a solid membership base, we have the new display and website – so we have updated the tools and infrastructure – now it's time for nitty gritty projects.

My thanks to the committee – for dedication, ideas, patience and lots of hard work. They have done much more than their job descriptions! Definitely accomplished multi-taskers!

We have achieved a lot this year – thank you Jennifer, Rod, Pearl, Karen and Jenny for your exceptional work.

Janet

“It doesn't matter how small you are, you **can** make a difference. Try sleeping with a mosquito”.

Dalai Lama

From the North:



Hello all, I am a fairly recent member of QFS and have also recently moved to north Queensland. Hence I thought this was a perfect opportunity to spread the word of the society further north and also report back on some fantastic frogs I am hoping to encounter in the region.

The peak of frog activity in the far north remains the warm summer wet season, however, there are still plenty of frogs to be found during late winter and early spring. Fortunately, the areas around Mission Beach, Tully and Cardwell can always be relied upon for plenty of rainfall! A few rainy nights spent in search of some of the significant Wet Tropics species such as Green-eyed Tree Frog (*Litoria genimaculata*), Waterfall Frog (*Litoria nannotis*) and Australian Lacelid (*Nyctimystes dayi*) unfortunately didn't pay off. However, I have been able to come across a few others. On one particular night I was able to locate a couple of Ornate Nurseryfrogs (*Cophixalus ornatus*) that were calling 1 - 2m off the ground in some vine forest vegetation adjacent to a small creek (see photo). Unfortunately I also collected dozens of leeches as I fought my way through the three different types of Lawyer Vine that lined the creek! I have also come across Northern Dwarf Treefrog (*Litoria bicolor*) quite a few times.

Some road spotting also revealed an abundance of old friends from SEQ including Rocket Frogs (*Litoria nasuta*), Stony Creek Frogs (*Litoria wilcoxii*) and Striped Marsh Frogs (*Limnodynastes peronii*). I'll definitely be looking forward to revisiting some of the creeks during the warmer months and hopefully have much more news to bring!

Tyrone.

.....

Phil's guide to Zen: Putting a tail on a weasel is a cunning plan.

.....

Better wetter: Frogs and water

Story and photos by Ed Meyer

About Ed Meyer – “Ed is a self-confessed batrachophile (frog fancier) with a particular interest in the biology and conservation of Australian Frogs. Over the past 15 years he has spent many wet nights observing and studying frogs, both for research and recreational purposes”.

(first published in Wildlife Australia Winter 2008)

How do Australian frogs cope with water shortages on Earth's driest continent?

Frogs in general are highly dependent on water for survival, much more so than other terrestrial vertebrates, i.e., mammals, birds and reptiles. This is due largely to the permeable nature of frog skin, which allows greater evaporative water loss from frogs' bodies. Because of this, frogs must contend with significant losses of body water, particularly in hot dry environments where evaporation rates are high. This they do surprisingly well, with many species able to tolerate short-term losses of 20 percent or more (far more than most other terrestrial vertebrates can tolerate). Water lost through evaporation will, nevertheless, need to be replaced if a frog is to survive - a significant challenge where water is scarce.

For frogs, access to water is important not only for survival but also reproduction. With little more than jelly for protection, the eggs of frogs are highly vulnerable to dehydration. For this reason, most species spawn in water. Those that don't spawn in water generally lay their eggs in wet soil, moist leaf litter, or directly above water (where the relative humidity remains high). After hatching from eggs, tadpoles need access to water for several weeks or months to complete their development. Should the water in breeding ponds dry up too quickly, few, if any, tadpoles will survive to metamorphosis.

(FIG 7, 20)

Keeping cool (and wet) in the dry

Given their dependence on water, Australia's hot predominantly dry climate would seem most inhospitable to frogs. Yet, many frog species appear not only to survive, but thrive here, even on the driest continent on earth. To do this, many Australian species have evolved various strategies for conserving water which allow them to cope more readily with water shortages.

The nocturnal habit of most Australian frogs, for example, helps reduce evaporative water loss by minimising exposure to the hot sun. To avoid the sun and heat, frogs seek shelter under leaf litter and rocks, down crayfish burrows or buried in soil. Toilets and down pipes are also a favoured haunt, providing a cool moist refuge for many treefrog species. Where cover is scarce, frogs may be forced to huddle together to avoid drying out in the sun.

On dusk, having avoided the heat of the day, frogs emerge from cover to forage. At this time, frogs may seek water or moist ground to replace water lost during the day. Unlike other terrestrial species, frogs rehydrate not by drinking with their mouths, but by using the skin on the underside of their body. This area of thin skin, where the frog's body contacts the ground, is known as the 'pelvic' or 'seat patch'. To increase their uptake of water from wet substrates, frogs and toads splay their legs, pressing the pelvic patch flat against the ground.

Water-conserving postures

Frogs modify their posture not only to take up water, but also to control evaporative water loss. By closing their eyes, lowering their head and tucking their limbs under their body, frogs can reduce the area of body surface exposed to dry air. In doing so they reduce the rate at which water is lost from the body.

(FIG 3)

While slowing water loss, this water-conserving posture, does little to protect frogs from dehydration in exposed situations (e.g., when sitting out on reeds or high up in the canopy of a eucalyptus tree in the summer sun). So how is it that species like the graceful tree frog (*Litoria gracilentia*) and common sedge frog (*Litoria fallax*) can stay sitting out in the sun for extended periods? The answer to this question lies in the skin of these frogs.

In arboreal (tree-dwelling) frog species, water loss across the skin is dramatically reduced by the presence of lipids under and/or over the skin. Here they form a waxy layer which retards the movement of water across the upper body (in the same way the waxy cuticle of plant leaves reduce water loss across the surface of leaves). In some species, dried mucus on the skin surface may also help reduce evaporative water loss.

As discussed earlier, water shortages can affect tadpoles as well as frogs. To deal with the threat of pond drying, tadpoles of some Australian species can speed up their development, allowing tadpoles to metamorphose more quickly. In some cases, tadpoles may even be able to complete their development in as little as a fortnight. The ability to accelerate development in this way is a particular advantage in arid areas, where water disappears all too quickly.

Digging in for a dry spell

Frogs of the genus *Cyclorana* (pronounced 'Sie-klo-ra-na') inhabit some of the driest parts of Australia. Though not uncommon, these frogs are rarely seen except after heavy summer rains, when they emerge en masse to breed.

Most of their life is spent buried deep underground where they may remain for months, sometimes years, waiting for rain. With water in such short supply, *Cyclorana* must do all they can to conserve it. In order to conserve water, these frogs not only burrow underground but adopt a water-conserving posture like that of treefrogs. Further to this, *Cyclorana* surround themselves in a water-proof cocoon composed of mucus and shed layers of *stratum corneum* (the outer layer of skin which frogs normally slough every few days). This cocoon covers the entire body of the frogs, except for the nostrils, significantly reducing water loss across the skin.

As well as conserving water, *Cyclorana* are able to store extra water in their bladder for later use. The urinary bladder in these frogs is large enough to hold the equivalent of a frog's weight in water. Dilute urine stored in the bladder can be reabsorbed later when the surrounding soil dries out, reducing the risk of dehydration.

Growing up quickly

Cyclorana must be quick to breed when rain does fall, so that tadpoles can complete their development before ponds dry out. Though high water temperatures (upwards of 40° C) help speed up tadpole development, this may not be enough to ensure tadpoles metamorphose before ponds dry up. Frequently, *Cyclorana* tadpoles are left high and dry by receding waters, dying in their thousands. Those which make it to metamorphosis before ponds dry out must then face another hazard: other hungry burrowing frogs. Cannibalism is rife amongst *Cyclorana* species, with many newly metamorphosed frogs falling prey to older siblings and adult frogs. Those which make it through the short wet season without being eaten must then survive many months underground waiting for rain to return.

(FIG 5, 2)

Amongst those *Cyclorana* species found in Australia's arid interior is, believe it or not, an aquatic burrowing frog: the water-holding frog *Cyclorana platycephala*. Unlike most other *Cyclorana* which enter water only to spawn, this species spends nearly all of its time in water. For a frog living in desert areas, it is remarkably well-adapted to life in water, having fully webbed feet and eyes situated on top of its head. Just how such a frog comes to inhabit the driest parts of our continent is something of a mystery.

How wet is our future?

While many Australian frogs cope well with short-term water shortages, long-term shortages may still pose a serious threat to most, if not all, species. If predictions concerning global warming and climate change are correct, there are tough times ahead for Australia's frog fauna. Of particular concern for frogs are predicted increases in evaporation rates, reduced rainfall and seasonal shifts in the timing of rainfall. Species preferring cool, wet conditions, such as the Bellenden Ker nursery frog (*Cophixalus neglectus*) may be particularly vulnerable to global warming and climate change. According to some modelling studies, warming of just a few degrees could trigger the decline and extinction of this and

other mountain-top species in a matter of decades. Only time will tell whether these and other frogs species can survive the water shortages wrought by global warming.

Figure 2. A young snapping frog *Cyclorana novaehollandiae* devours one of its own kind. Such cannibalistic behaviour is common amongst *Cyclorana* species inhabiting arid and semi-arid parts of Australia.



Figure 3. The posture adopted by this graceful treefrog *Litoria gracilenta* will significantly reduce evaporative water loss.



Figure 5. A green-striped burrowing frog *Cyclorana alboguttata* nearing metamorphic climax emerges from a breeding pond.



Figure 7. Spawn of the red-eyed treefrog *Litoria chloris* floating in water.



Figure 20. The great barred frog *Mixophyes fasciolatus* prefers wet forest areas.



+++++

From the Editors Desk:

Hello everyone. I'd like to introduce myself – my name is Naomi (Nono) Nebe and I reside in the Bundaberg area. This is the first time I've done a newsletter so please bear with me as I "fumble and stumble" my way along.

My interest in frogs goes back a fair way but it has only been in the last 5 years or so that the interest has become more consuming (some people might even call it bordering on an obsession). I have been fortunate enough to have been granted a Carers Permit for Amphibians as well as being on the committee of a local wildlife carers group and a member of other wildlife groups. It has been a huge learning curve when people contact me regarding sick and injured frogs – I'm still learning. Many thanks to Debbie at the Qld Frog Hospital in Cairns for her invaluable assistance at these times as well as the people at the Qld Museum who have aided me in the past.

Whilst we're on the subject of thanking people – a big thank you to my husband John for his patience and support as at times we have frogs in care or "babysitting" them in our upstairs bathroom together with containers of woodies (cockroaches) and crickets for frog food.

Also a BIG thank you to ALL OF YOU from me (a passionate frog lover) for your tireless efforts in helping to protect and save our frogs. It is very heartening to know that there are people like you around. I'd like to draw everyone's attention to an article in the Courier Mail (24/8/08 page 23) regarding Australian frogs facing the biggest wildlife extinction threat since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. It makes interesting reading and is very thought provoking.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email, phone or fax 41551378 if you have anything to go into our newsletters. I'm still trying to familiarise myself with the "new" software that has been installed on my computer so hopefully I'll be able to master it one day.

Til next time
Happy frogging
Nono

CAMPS

Goomburra – Altitude Frogs
18-19 October

Come to beautiful Goomburra for the opportunity to see *Mixophyes fleayi* (Fleay's Barred-frog) and *Kyarranus kundagungan* (Red and Yellow Mountainfrog). Ring Rod 3264 6391 **BEFORE** booking Manna Gum campsite online (<http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/parks> and forests)
QNPWS camp fees apply (\$4.85/person/night). Composting toilets, tap water (boil/treat before drinking) and BBQs (supply own firewood) are available.

Bribie Island – Wallum (Acid) Frogs
8-9 November

This will be an exploratory trip, an adventure with the thrill of investigation! Who knows what we will find? As 4WD are essential, this trip will take a fair bit of arrangement – **PLEASE RING ROD 3264 6391 ASAP** if you are interested, so carpooling can be arranged.

This trip is dependent on having a least two 4WD and also weather dependent as tracks could become boggy in heavy rain.

Gallaghers is a bush campsite with NO facilities (no loos; no water; fuel-stoves only). As well as QNPWS camp site fees (\$4.85/person/night) the vehicle permit fee will need to be split between participants (\$35.50 per vehicle).

Village journal
Issue Number: 232 :: June 2008

<http://www.villagejournal.org.au>
Silver Desmodium Frog Killer

Dear Editors,

I made a gruesome discovery yesterday afternoon on my property and thought it was important to share.

Most are aware of the ability of Silver **Desmodium** (*Desmodium uncinatum*) to catch / disable fauna such as birds with their extremely sticky / clingy seeds. I was unaware of its ability to hold baby green tree frogs to their stems. When doing some weed control yesterday I found hundreds of dead baby Green Tree Frogs stuck to the stems of the Silver **Desmodium**. It appears the frogs had jumped onto the stem of the plant but were then unable to remove themselves, dying a horrible death either through desiccation or starvation.

I hope this vine will be a higher priority to control on any site now that we know its effects on our native frogs

Regards,
Daniel Cox, Meerschaumvale

Also article by above at ... inc photo

<http://www.envite.org.au/forms/Publications/newsletter/2008/EnvITE%20News%20Autumn%2008.pdf>

Feb 29 2004, 01:40 PM ENVIROTALK AUSTRALIA

<http://envirotalk.com.au/>

Desmodium uncinatum or silver leafed **desmodium** is a plant that can kill native wildlife. It is an introduced improved pasture legume that is very hairy and sticks to anything it comes in contact with.

I have seen frogs, stuck dehydrated and dead in this plant. I have been involved in rescuing a Grey goshawk from desmodiums grasp. Fairy wrens, lizards, microbats are regularly caught and killed by this nasty plant. Around here we call it velcrose weed because of its ability to stick to anything.

The best way to control it is by finding the base of the plant and scraping, I use a vege peeler and apply straight glyphosate. Foliar spraying is relatively in effective as the hairs hold spray droplets off the leaf surface. Hand pulling is difficult as the plant develops a large tap root and readily shoots back if it is broken off. It is best to control the plant before seed set as it sets lots of seeds that stick to every thing.

If you have this plant on your property, or its in an area of bushland your working on, take steps to eradicate it as it spreads very fast and affects both native fauna and flora.

Good luck and happy weeding.

Cheers Ed

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Thanks to all contributors to the Spring 08 edition of the Newsletter. Items for the Summer edition by 14 November please.



*Dedicated to a
better Brisbane*

A BCC GRANT HELPED TO COVER THE PRINTING COSTS OF THIS NEWSLETTER

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