

# FrogSheet

# Highlights

Autumn 2001

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

The frog gods listened! The rains began! In late January in the south east corner, vice president Rod Pattison added another important new site for the Rare Green-thighed Frog the very same night I was fortunate enough to do the same. The two sites are many kilometres apart, but the fact that it happened shows that the most technical and scientific objective of the Society is very much alive and well. SURVEYING! I love it! Rod's report is in this edition and my report will follow in the next frogsheet.

A former Brisbane colleague Dr Martin Cohen is now our Townsville Coordinator. From my NatureSearch experience, I can see big things for frogs in that part of the world. There are a lot of very enthusiastic naturalists around there and Martin has a few survey plans, one which targets the Brown Orb-frog or Northern Spadefoot *Notaden melanoscaphus* which may consist of an isolated population threatened by urbanisation.

The Bowman Park Project is proving to be an amazing success. The benefits for frogs are already apparent. On one visit to monitor biodiversity changes, I recorded a Great Barred-frog tadpole in the 'new' creek. Something that couldn't have happened in a waterless concrete drain! Dragonfly species have increased from 3 to 15 in two years and the number of both Eastern Water Dragons and Eastern Water Skinks is gobsmacking. Congratulations for this should go to the Society's Dr Phil Bird and BCC officers and elected representatives who persisted, sometimes against heavy odds.

And for those who are not familiar with the enormous workload our Secretary voluntarily shoulders - trust me, it is enormous. On behalf of all members - thanks Jenny!

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## DECLINING FROGS

Unfortunately we have yet another addition to this section.

The *Wallum Froglet Crinia tinnula*.

This frog was originally described by Straughan and Main in 1966.

**CALL:** A winter/early spring caller. Like a short high pitch "tching)tching". Similar to *C. parinsignifera* despite references to 'tinkling'. Calls from the ground within a tangle of wallum adapted water plants. Very difficult to locate.

**SIZE:** M 16-18mm. F 16-18mm

**IDENTIFICATION:** Winter breeder; small, grey-fawn-brown-black patterned back; line of white dots on throat crossed by longitudinal light line; check position of nostril in relation to eye and tip of snout.

**DESCRIPTION:** Very similar to *Crinia parinsignifera* (Beeping Froglet), with a line of white dots on the midline of the throat usually crossed by a distinct longitudinal white line, although this may also be found on some *C. signifera*. On *C. tinnula* the nostrils are equidistant from the tip of the snout and the eye. On *C. signifera* the nostrils are about one third of the distance from the snout to the eye.

**MICRO-HABITAT:** Hidden in fringing vegetation of wallum swamps.

**SPAWN:** 30 - 120 eggs laid singly or in clumps attached to plants in the shallows of acid swamps, pH 3.5 to 5.5.

**RANGE:** Coastal from Newcastle to Fraser Island. **CURRENT STATUS:** Found in 5% of sites

surveyed; Berrinba, Burbank, Karrawatha Forest, Moreton Island, Capalaba and Parkinson. Can only be considered secure on Moreton Island.

Habitat protection is vital for the survival of this species.

Outside our area this species in the right habitat can be considered common, however their habitat is under constant threat. Thankfully a great deal is reserved in conservation lands.

Information supplied by "The Qld Frog Society - Frogs Of Brisbane and Surrounding Areas"



Photo - Rob Morgan

Click to [here](#) see larger image

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## Animal Antics in your garden

Don Yates wrote to us with his story. We hope you appreciate his great sense of humour as much as we did. Thank you, Don.

"There is a frog living in my garden that has a most unusual lifestyle. Being a fairly new member, I do have difficulty identifying calls, (even though I have the tape) and the best I can describe the call is a sort of "aark" coming from the back of the throat, however its size and lifestyle may give you some clues)). I first noticed this frog one night whilst backing the car out of the carport. His head was sticking out the hollow handle of my cement mixer, he stayed there for a few days or more before deciding to up market his lifestyle by shifting to the hollow arm of the folding clothesline which measures 30 x 15mm. He has been living in this for several months now despite the arm often being extended and whizzing around for 2 or 3 days at a time. A boozy acquaintance suggested he was just trying to dry himself out; somebody else said he could be a swinger; but I'd prefer to think his actions had much deeper meaning than all this - maybe he wanted to investigate the merry go round of life, whichever, - he wanted something more concrete than his previous life. I'm assuming this is a Litoria species because of his climbing habit, and should I have discovered a hitherto unknown member of the frog world - I'm suggesting they be called "Litoria spiralis"

Michael Tyler watch out."

**Please send your wildlife stories to**

**The Editor,**

**QFS, PO Box 7017,**

**East Brisbane Qld 4169**

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## Report from Frog Week - O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse December 2000

**By Sue Rixon and Rosemarie Neve**

Despite the dry weather, frog week turned out to be a successful week. Participants came from Qld, NSW and Vic and many in-house guests came along to the various activities during the week.

Sunday started with Harry Hines and Woo O'Reilly showing slides of the frogs we should find and how to identify them; it was then off on our first bus trip to Morans Creek where we found *Litoria pearsoniana* and *Mixophyes fleayi*. The rest of the week we were entertained with lectures and very rewarding bus trips to the Kerry Valley, the Gold Coast, Stockyard Creek and Rose and Joe's dam. Short walks were also included to Cainbale Creek and Morans Creek Falls.

The lecturers included Harry Hines talking on the Chytrid Fungus and showing us very interesting slides of frogs of the Asian-pacific region and how they compare with the frogs of Lamington. Ed Meyer talked on tadpoles and how we could try and identify them. He also gave us an insight into the acid frogs he is studying for his PhD. Jean-Marc Hero gave an interesting talk on the latest research available on endangered frogs. There were also talks on photographing frogs by Glen Threlfo and recording frogs and other sounds by Dave Stewart. Jenny Holdway from QFS gave a talk on what the society aims to achieve in the community and it poured with rain all through Jenny's talk.

At the bbq on the last night, Dr Glen Ingram invited us to tell him the name of a frog and he then proceeded to tell us about when, where and who had discovered the frog. It was a very different and entertaining way to learn about frogs.

During the week we found and identified 26 species of native frogs and one introduced species (see list). It is the 4th frog week that Rosemarie and I have attended and whilst it is a challenge not to eat too much whilst staying at O'Reilly's, it is great to continue to learn about frogs from such enthusiastic people. Frog week this year is December 9th to 14th and you can stay all or part of the week. Hope to see some of you there. Good frogging for the rest of the year.

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## **KEEPING FROGS OUT OF TOILETS & TANKS**

**Information supplied by Jodi Jadine and John Clarke**

Are you in a rural community and find that having frogs in your toilet and tanks is a common problem? Do you want a solution?

Unfortunately this problem can cause many people to dislike frogs. People are taking frogs several kilometres away to try and get rid of them. It is believed that some people even relent to killing the frogs. We should focus on the fact that if frogs are getting into your tanks, vermon and insects etc are as well. If your tank is not sealed properly and frogs are getting in, at least they would be eating any nasties also getting in. Here are some suggestions: If anyone else has any other ideas, please let us know.

### **Frogs in Tanks.**

- Check sieve - make sure tight - no gaps (frogs can lift).
- Insect gauze over openings.
- Light outside to attract insects - when frogs come out, block up.
- Check the next night - if frogs still in tank let out, block up.
- May have to repeat this several times. May take a couple of weeks.
- If all else fails - drastic measure - drain tank - catch frogs - seal tank. (No one in this district would want to do this since we get little rain and tank water is the only source of water for many people.)

### **Frogs in Toilets.**

- Breather pipe - check insect gauze - seal tight.
- Frog proof toilet room - screens, no gaps in walls.
- Take frogs outside once frog proofed.
- May have to put a heavy board between seat and lid for awhile (frogs can lift seats).
- Old Queenslanders, schools - can be difficult, may never get rid of frogs from toilet.

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## **DISCOVERY OF THE MYSTICAL GREEN-THIGHED FROG**

**From our Vice President Rod Pattison**

I joined the Frog Society about 2 years ago. Thanks to its members, my knowledge of frogs has spiraled, along with my involvement - being voted in as Vice President at the last AGM. I think you could say I have become a "frogger". On one hand it can be frustrating on those perfect nights, when the rain pours down and I haven't got a hope in hell of getting out because of my commitments to work, family etc. But on the other hand to have an "ear piercing" experience of a dozen species numbered in their hundreds, all calling for a mate, makes me think there really is a heaven on earth.

Anyway, so why have I suddenly decided to write something for the Frogsheet? Well, it started when I read an article in the local paper about Pine Rivers Environment Officer (John Bowden) finding the Green-thighed frog (*Litoria brevipalmata*) at Joyner. This frog, listed as rare only appears after heavy rain. So what else can a devoted "frogger" think but "lets go find them". After enlisting the help of a trusted frogging partner, Dan Mills, and of course, sufficient rain, we set off in search of the allusive brevs. Did I say allusive? Well, that's the way it turned out for us. For months on end we searched 10-15 sites a night. We enjoyed many good frogging nights, but no brevs to be found.

We certainly started thinking we were searching for the Holy Grail. However, on the night of the 2nd of March, after two days of beautiful weather (pouring rain of course) we decided to look one more time. In a deafening chorus of Gracefuls and Greens, the words "Can you hear that?" were said. "I think so" came the reply, "I think it's coming from over there". It was only about 15 metres from where we had been a dozen times before when the great frog God shone upon us. It's easy to see why it was called the Green-thighed frog. What a spectacular frog it is and well worth every minute of searching. Unfortunately the joy of finding this frog has led to other problems. The colony is living in relatively undisturbed bushland but it is unlikely to stay that way. We will certainly try our hardest to negotiate the preservation of this brev colony. Well that's all from me. Keep those headlamps glowing and may the great frog God shine upon you too.

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## **FROG MEN WIN CSIRO MEDAL FOR SOLVING FUNGUS RIDDLE**

### **Queensland Media statement**

Discovery of a fungal cause for the dramatic drop in frog populations in many parts of the world has won two Queensland researchers a CSIRO medal for research achievement.

Environment Minister Dean Wells congratulated Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officers Keith McDonald and Harry Hines, two members of an international group of 14 researchers recently awarded the CSIRO medal for helping solve the world-wide mystery.

"The group discovered a new species of chytrid fungus that infects the skin and causes the death of frogs," Mr Wells said.

"The disease has been linked with the rapid decline in frog populations and mass die-offs of frogs in areas of Australia and other countries. "The award recognises the contribution of Mr McDonald and Mr Hines who

established a monitoring program and collected specimens when declines in Queensland's rainforest frog populations became apparent.

"These two dedicated officers were responsible for much of the organisation and funding for the project, as well as carrying out field research. Funds from the National Heritage Trust greatly assisted the research."

Mr McDonald, based at Atherton, and Mr Hines, based at Moggill in Brisbane, worked jointly with other Australian and overseas researchers to investigate why frog populations were declining and mass die-offs were occurring in pristine areas of Australia and Central America not thought to be affected by human pollution. "Data collected in Queensland was shared internationally via the Internet and scientific publications, and assisted other countries when similar die-offs began," Mr Wells said.

"The medal citation acknowledges the praise from scientific and conservation communities for the international collaborations within the group. "Its members showed how countries can work together to find solutions to global conservation problems." Mr Wells said the next stage of the research was to discover how and why the newly discovered disease affects amphibian populations and what could be done to combat it to conserve the frogs.

More information about threatened frogs is available on the Environmental Protection Agency's website. Go to <http://www.env.qld.gov.au/environment/plant/endangered/> and follow the links to declining amphibians.

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## BRISBANE FROG SURVEY RESULTS

Gordon Frost

### *Giant (Cane) Toad *Bufo marinus**

This introduced Texas to Amazon native is a masterful example of a frog that has evolved to exploit a multi-variant habitat type. In the peak of colonisation this frog can reach plague proportions and then settle down to sparser more even distribution. Our survey results understate the relative abundance of this species, it is likely to occur in all of Brisbane's suburbs, fortunately there are many areas relatively devoid of toads. Brisbane Forest Park and Nathan recorded in the greater than 100 range. Algester and Karawatha recorded 51-100. The 11-30\50 range being recorded in Anstead, Ashgrove,

Bardon, Berrinba, Brookfield, Burbank, Carole Park, Chermside, Enoggera, Forest Lake, Grange, Heathwood, Holland Park, Lytton, Macgregor, Mcdowell, Moggill, Morningside, Mount Coot-tha, Parkinson, Rocklea. Taigum, Tarragindi, Wakerley and Yeronga. Many isolates and smaller volumes in other areas indicate the species success in the Brisbane area. It does not exist on Moreton Island. It was our third most recorded frog species, however in biomass it out-competes all our other frog species in Brisbane. This with its toxic properties at all stages of development and its explosive fecundity are the main reason for its abundance in man disturbed habitats. These frogs are highly efficient in cleaning up frog food; ground animals of any size it can catch and stuff in to its cavernous mouth. Our opening up and mowing, draining and conversion to cattle pastures favours the expansion of this almost commensal species. There can be no doubt this species in-balances whole native ecosystems although it has a natural apathy to dense ground covers and cooler temperatures; its capacity as a generalised invasive ground predator is a remarkable example of adaptive fitness.

Certain areas have the capacity to have the populations eradicated or managed to reduce numbers to non-destructive limits. Excellent frog areas such as Grinstead Park, (10sps) have benefited greatly from regular toad busts. If the area is isolated the success rate is high, areas of open range eg BFP must await science to find a way. Must be regarded as an introduced species now native to our environment but for which control measures should be compulsory, eradication should be a national policy given some priority in application and funding.

The next issue of this report will highlight some of the significant spots in Brisbane to sight frogs as revealed by our members during the survey.

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