

Dear Frogwatchers!!

Lots is happening behind the scene- here a quick update:

FROGWATCH Publication: Martin Westgate from the ANU's Fenner School is the driving force behind this huge task- is currently in the process of responding to reviewer comments. How long it will take for the PLOS article to be published after that is difficult to say but we do hope for a quick turnaround. PLOS actually stands for [Public Library Of Science](https://www.plos.org/) and can be found under <https://www.plos.org/>

Changes in the FROGWATCH citizen science program: In order to focus as much on the Science as we do on the Citizen we are planning to implement the following changes

1. Reducing the # of FROGWATCH sites from 500 to 100-150 and regarding all remaining sites as key sites

WHY?? – So that all FROGWATCH sites get monitored every year, which will make our data set more consistent and easier to analyse, e.g. doing a comparison between years. Since 2002 the number of FROGWATCH sites has increased every year, with many sites only visited once or twice. This inconsistency creates a lot of “data noise” and makes analysing the data set very difficult. Having less sites, which get visited every year makes the data set more manageable and the coordination of monitoring much easier.

In practise this means we will: **keep** most FROGWATCH sites with ongoing and consistent monitoring records; **delete** all private property sites with patchy, irregular records and all public sites that have been monitored only once or twice; **establish** new FROGWATCH sites in strategically important areas, such as different altitudes or in areas with proposed or recent development.

2. Introducing a monthly monitoring approach, similar to the Waterwatch monitoring, to supplement the FROGWATCH Census activities

WHY?? – A) Many Frogwatchers have noticed an earlier onset of breeding activities over the past 10 years and have pointed out that many more frogs were calling in the lead up to Census week than during the actual event.

B) Several frog species in the ACT do breed during winter or in summer and have so far not been included in our frog monitoring efforts.

C) Warmer temperatures allow species which have previously not been recorded in the ACT, to extend their distribution range into the Capital Region.

To document these **effects of climate change** we desperately need to a) monitor the shift in breeding season, b) include observations on winter and summer breeders, to gain knowledge on their potential behavioural changes, and c) closely monitor species advancing their distribution range into the ACT

3. Establishing a range of **FROGWATCH action teams** (WEATHER, BREEDING ONSET, NEW SPECIES, HABITAT ASSESSMENT) for specific tasks

WHY?? –

ACTION TEAM WEATHER Some species can only be found under very specific conditions, which not always arise during Census week. To capture the distribution of these frogs we need volunteers to monitor designated areas after an email alert e.g. monitoring after heavy rain to capture burrowing frogs

ACTION TEAM BREEDING ONSET we need fairly intensive monitoring over the lead up and during spring at a range of different habitats at different altitudes to investigate behavioural shifts triggered by climate change in our local frogs

ACTION TEAM NEW SPECIES This group will spring into action to monitor designated spots for "new arrivals" at regular intervals.

ACTION TEAM HABITAT ASSESSMENT One of our future focus will be the interaction between habitat value and frog occurrence/abundance. To stream line collected data on habitat attributes I need a group of volunteers to help me evaluate ALL Frogwatch sites each year in spring. This may seem a huge task but with 6 teams of 2 it should all be done within a day.

In summary this means that the FROGWATCH Program is extending from a once-off fun citizen science activity to a more ongoing and question driven commitment to our local environment. Streamlining the program will not only enable us to find answers to questions regarding habitat quality, species distribution, climate change and other important topics. It will also make us more consistent, relevant and applied and therefore ensure that the program will keep going well beyond my retirement (in 22 years).

As all this can only be done with your help, please spread the word, join our action team email list and/or adopt a FROGWATCH site for monthly monitoring!! I am looking forward to an overflowing mailbox!!!