

Dear Frogwatchers!!

hope you are excited about the Frogwatch update as I am, especially after living through the computer-induced chaos of the last 5 weeks!! All my files and photos, my emails and my address book seemed doomed when I had a complete hard drive failure, which was followed by a nasty and persistent virus infection on my newly established computer. However, thanks to computer nerds and geeks on wheels all ended better than expected and 500 hand-entered email addresses later I hope my mailing list is as close to complete as possible!!

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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** and can be found under <https://www.plos.org/>

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**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 streamline 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!!!**

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Just a few more bits of information:

#### **Fraser Artist and Landcare Volunteer wins Catchment Groups Native Grasslands Art Exhibition**

Congratulations to Angharad Dean, Mulligans Friend and Mt Rogers Landcarer on her painting 'In Search of Lost Time 2' which won the ACT Region Catchment Group Art Exhibition. Over 60 works on the Grasslands theme were exhibited in the foyer of ACTEWAGL house Civic from 13-18 April. Angharad entered 2 works, describing them as remnants of what Bill Gammage describes as 'templates' managed by Aboriginal people before Europeans arrived. The exhibition, a collaboration with the Artists Society, was designed to use art to help raise awareness of the work undertaken by local Catchment Groups to improve sustainability and conserve the natural environment with focus on our critically endangered temperate grasslands.

#### **Bettong walks @ Mulligans Flat**

Have you heard about the twilight Bettong walks @ Mulligans Flat?? I was lucky enough to go on one of these great walks last week. The small group of participants of the guided walk met just outside the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve. After a short introduction and a general overview we walked to the woolshed where we sat down to listen to more fascinating facts and stories while the last day light quickly faded away. Equipped with special red-light torches we then embarked on a "bettong hunt" or better on a "bettong eye-shine hunt". It was sooooo much fun. Everyone got very excited when we spotted our first bettong!! They are extremely cute and extremely fast. You blink and you miss it!! During our walk through the dark we spotted at least 14 bettongs, quite a few bats and -believe it or not- 2 frogs!! a *Limnodynastis tasmaniensis* was happily hopping in front of us, right in the middle of the path before sitting perfectly still for a few photo opportunities. While we were admiring its spots and all a whistling tree frog (*Litoria verauxii*) came hopping along and situated itself close to the spotted grass frog, as if to say: look at me- I am much bigger and better!! What a sight. The whole night was just awesome and I highly recommend the walk, it is a great gift for everyone!! For more information just visit <http://bettongs.org/visit-us/>

#### **Friends of Black Mountain exhibition at Telstra Tower**

Black Mountain Nature Reserve: A Special Place Exhibition

The exhibition has been created by the ParkCare group Friends of Black Mountain together with Molonglo Catchment Group, and is supported with funding made available by the ACT Government under the ACT Heritage Grants Program. It features a series of panels displaying beautiful photographs and up to date information about this special place.

From 11 April to 9 May 2015, 9.00am to 9.00pm daily. Lower Ground Floor, Telstra Tower, Black Mountain.

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This is it for now

Please keep in touch and let me know if you or someone else would be interested to be part of an action-team. Feel free to circulate our newsletter through your networks!

Talk soon  
Anke Maria

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