frogs

in your backyard

FROGS OF THE ACT AND REGION

The ACT region is home to approximately 22 frog species - 9 of these are relatively common, and can often be found in our local backyards, national parks and parklands. Unfortunately, many of our local frog species are in decline and some are threatened with extinction. Some species like the Corroboree Frog are not found anywhere else in the world! Habitat destruction, exotic pest predators, disease, pollutants and other factors can contribute to these amphibian declines.

You can learn more about our local frog populations and help to protect them by creating frog friendly habitats, avoiding pesticides, properly disposing of chemical products and detergents, and working with others to improve your local environment. The ACT and Region Frogwatch Program is an exciting community activity open to everyone with an interest in frogs. We can support you to help our local frogs by providing free resources, information, training and great opportunities for volunteering!

To get involved or find out more, contact the Ginninderra Catchment Group, ACT Frogwatch Coordinator on 6278 3309 or have a look at: **www.ginninderralandcare.org.au.**

Photo: JC Wombey

PLAINS FROGLET

Crinia parinsignifera

Appearance: This frog is brown in colour and grows to about 3 cm in length. Similar in appearance to the Common Eastern Froglet. Variable back pattern ranging from plain-coloured to strongly marked with raised longitudinal ridges and bumps.

Status: A very common species, found predominantly in the open country and plains.

Mating call: Slightly drawn out "wwrreeeeek" sound, repeated regularly. Calls from August to November.

Habitat: Lowland rivers, Lowland dams, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes. Open country and plains.

Photo: JC Wombey

COMMON EASTERN FROGLET

Crinia signifera

Appearance: Adults are 25 – 30 mm in length and have dark triangular markings on the upper lips and darker bands on the hind legs. They have a variable back pattern colour ranging from grey-brown to reddish and can be smooth or covered in a series of ridges. The underside of the body is granular with a black and white blotched pattern.

Status: An abundant species with widespread distribution in south-eastern Australia.

Mating call: A "crick crick crick crick crick" sound. Calls from June to January.

Habitat: Upland bogs, Upland rivers, Montane creeks, Montane seepages, Lowland rivers, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams, Marshes, Ponds and Lakes.

Photo: JC Wombey

EASTERN BANJO FROG OR POBBLEBONK

Limnodynastes dumerilii

Appearance: Adults are large (up to 8.5 cm) and have grey-brown colouration, a white glandular stripe from below the eye to above the base of the forelimb, and a broad, dark band from the eye to the ear.

Status: It is a common species with wide distribution.

Mating call: A distinctive loud 'bonk' when frog is in the water; or a loud 'toc' if calling from land. Calls from September to January.

Habitat: Upland rivers, Montane creeks, Lowland rivers, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes.

Photo: P Ormay

STRIPED MARSH FROG OR BROWN-STRIPED FROG

Limnodynastes peronii

Appearance: Grows to about 7 cm in length with a pattern of distinctive dark and light-brown stripes on the back. They have a slightly raised pale stripe running along the upper jaw edge from the snout and below the eyes to the fore limbs. They also have a dark stripe along each side of the head that passes through the eye.

Status: Generally uncommon, mainly associated with open grasslands in low-lying areas.

Mating call: A distinctive single 'pop', 'toc' or 'splut' that is monotonously repeated once every few seconds. Calls from November to March.

Habitat: Lowland rivers, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes. Found mainly in low-lying country that has a good cover of perennial tussock grasses.

Photo: JC Wombey

SPOTTED GRASS FROG

Limnodynastes tasmaniensis

Appearance: It has a neatly blotched appearance of light and dark markings and is moderately large in size (up to about 5 cm). Some individuals have a distinctive red or orange stripe down the centre of the back. A line of white glandular tissue occurs from beneath the eye to the back of the leg.

Status: An abundant species with widespread distribution.

Mating call: A "kuk uk uk uk" - a bit like a toy machine gun. Male frogs call whilst floating in the water. Calls from September to March.

Habitat: Lowland rivers, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes. Associated with standing waters, including roadside ditches, marshes, swamps, lakes and ponds. They prefer situations where there is considerable flooded vegetation such as tussocks and sedges. During dry weather they shelter in deep cracks in the clays of dry wetlands, beneath large logs and in the base of grass tussocks.

Photo: JC Wombey

PERON'S TREE FROG

Litoria peronii

Appearance: Large size (up to 5 cm), broad round toe discs, yellow and black mottling behind the back legs, tiny emerald green flecks on the back and a horizontal pupil that appears cross-shaped.

Status: Common in farmland with scattered large eucalypt trees, woodland and there are farm dams or swamps for breeding.

Mating call: A loud descending rattle or cackle. A shorter chuckling sound is also made. Calls from September to December. Males usually call from dead trees, partly submerged logs, clumps of rushes and reeds and other elevated perches in the water, or at its edge.

Habitat: Lowland rivers, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes. During the day, may shelter in tree hollows and any loose bark or in deep fissures in dead timber.

Photo: P Ormay

WHISTLING TREE FROG

Litoria verreauxii verreauxii

Appearance: Adults reach about 3 cm in length. They can be distinguished by a dark brown or black stripe from in front of the nostrils, continuing through the eye to the base of the forelimb. They also have a broad, brownish, mid-dorsal marking which starts between the eyes and extends to the vent (which is usually partially or completely divided).

Status: Common in much of the region.

Mating call: A repeated whistling "cree … cree … cree … cree … cree …". Calls from June to October.

Habitat: Montane seepages, Lowland rivers, Lowland creeks, Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes. Relatively common in open valleys and cleared pasture country, particularly in areas where there are large shallow pools and stock ponds.

Photo: JC Wombey

SPOTTED BURROWING FROG

Neobatrachus sudelli

Appearance: Rather squat, short-legged species with a prominent tubercle under each foot (to aid digging). Frogs have numerous small, raised wart-like bumps on the back that give a sandpaper appearance. They also have a broad pattern of greenish-brown and darker brown blotches and patterns on the back. Pupils form vertical slits.

Status: Widespread in the Southern Tablelands.

Mating call: A soft, rapidly repeated, lengthy sequence of evenly spaced "clucking" or soft "popping" sounds. Calling can occur at any time of the year, but only after extensive periods of wet weather.

Habitat: Swamps and Farm dams. They are a burrowing species, sheltering in deep burrows in the soil for much of the year.

Photo: P Ormay

SMOOTH TOADLET

Uperoleia laevigata

Appearance: Has a noticeably warty appearance and has a conspicuous orange patch behind and in front of each thigh. A pale triangular patch is also usually obvious on the head between the eyes and the tip of the snout.

Status: It is very common in the Canberra region, where it appears to prefer hill country. They occur in forest, woodland and tussock grassland in the Canberra region.

Mating call: A low-pitched, monotonous sounding "wwhhrrkkkkkk" repeated at intervals of a few seconds. The call sounds a little like that of the Plains Froglet, but is deeper and longer. Calls from September to February.

Habitat: Swamps, Farm dams and Lakes. They occur in forest, woodland and tussock grassland in the Canberra region. A range of drier habitat types where there are rocks or tussocks.

Photo: JC Wombey

GREEN AND GOLDEN BELL FROG

Litoria aurea

Appearance: A large green or green and brown/gold coloured frog. Some individuals grow to 12cm. Toes have very expanded toe discs and are fully webbed. It has a smooth back and is bright blue or purple on the hind side of the thighs (without any prominent pale or yellow spots).

Status: Vulnerable. Only one remaining population in the ACT region.

Mating call: Distinctive drawn out deep 'wrrraaaaagh wrrraaaaagh wrrrkk, wrrkkk wrrk'. Calls from September to January.

Habitat: A semi-aquatic species, spending much time in wetlands, either perched amongst emergent vegetation, floating or swimming in the water, or basking in direct sunlight. They prefer open country thickly vegetated with reeds, sedges and rushes and contained relatively permanent water.

Photo: JC Wombey

NORTHERN CORROBOREE FROG OR CORROBOREE FROG

Pseudophryne pengilleyi

Appearance: Has a striking yellowish-green (lime) and black striped pattern. A small frog, growing up to 25mm in length.

Status: Endangered. Only hundreds of individuals remain.

Mating call: The advertisement call is a short and nasal 'wrrankk … erkk … erkk', repeated infrequently. The threat call is a drawn out 'erhkkk'. Calls from January to April.

Habitat: Breeding occurs in a range of wetland types including moss or herb dominated areas, seepages along drainage depressions, and in pools in bogs and wet heaths. During the non-breeding season, adult and juvenile frogs may be found in woodlands on hillsides adjacent to the breeding habitat. Restricted to the mountainous region west of Canberra at altitudes between 900 and 1800m.

This poster was produced by the Ginninderra Catchment Group for the ACT and Region Frogwatch Program. Funding is provided through the Landcare Australia, Australia Post Grants Program, and the ACT Herpetological Association.

Descriptions of the frogs have been taken from 'Wet and Wild – A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country of the ACT and NSW' by M. Lintermans and W. Osborne, ACT, Canberra 2002. Published by Environment ACT.

Did you know....

Every frog species has a distinctive breeding call that we can use to distinguish between different species. Frogwatch volunteers use this monitoring method for our annual spring Census because it is accurate and non-invasive.

You can help out your local frogs by providing habitat for them in your backyard! Frogs need a place with shelter, food and protection from predators. Some native plants, mulch, rocks and logs are a good start – you could even build them a frog pond!

Frogs always need to keep their skin moist. Many species will shelter in damp leaf litter, under rocks or in cracks in tree bark during the daytime. Some species burrow into the ground to stay moist.

Frogs are sensitive to environmental change. The skin of eggs and adult frogs absorbs pollution as well as water, so they can tell us how polluted an area is.

The presence of Eastern Gambusia (a type of fish) in our waterways puts pressure on our local frog species. These fish were introduced from South America, and are known to harass and prey on tadpoles.

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