



FROGS

We have probably all ventured outside at night and heard frogs croaking their lungs out and thinking all the frogs in the district are gathered in this one area because of the extent of the noise. In fact if you listen closely there may be only 15- 20 frogs making all the noise. Their sound is quite loud and distinct (considering the size of the creature) and can be heard up to 1 km away.

From my findings there are 32 species of frogs in Victoria of which only 12 species occur within our area of Gippsland. Frog species are found to be restricted to designated areas and if relocated (by people) outside their designated area they generally do not survive. So we should not try to recolonise frogs by moving them from the area where we find them. Even relocation of frog-spawn within their own designated area is often unsuccessful and illegal.

There is a general conception that frogs live in water. This is not correct. In fact frogs will drown if they cannot get ready access to land. All frogs like water but they live underground or under logs or rocks (where it is damp) and only venture into water for breeding or feeding. Frogs can be active during the day, particularly if it is wet but they are at their most active at night time. So unless you disturb one whilst moving rocks or soil you will probably need to go “hunting” at night time to see them. Take a torch and you will see their eyes shining. With a light shining in their eyes frogs tend to freeze in their current position allowing you to get a close look at them.

How deep do frogs burrow ? – knee-deep, knee-deep

Apart from visual identification, frogs can be identified by their call. Generally the calls we hear are of the male during the breeding season. Individual frog calls are available on the internet – refer below for website.

Frogs breed when the male fertilises the eggs that are laid in the water by the female. The eggs are generally kept in a cluster by a jelly like substance. Some groups of eggs float on top of the water whilst others sink and lay on the bottom. The eggs hatch into tadpoles which have gills allowing them to breathe underwater (they cannot survive out of water).

The transition period from tadpole to frog varies considerably. The Southern Brown Tree frog takes 8 to 10 weeks to develop whereas the Banjo frog can take up to 15 months hence a year round water supply is required for Banjo frogs to survive.

Some interesting facts:

- Frogs do not drink. They absorb moisture through their skin
- Frogs are carnivores and only eat live creatures swallowing them whole
- Frogs have teeth but do not chew their prey; the teeth just assist in holding the prey
- Some frogs only lay 2 or 3 eggs per hatching whilst others lay tens of thousands
- Frogs retract their eyes into the back of their mouth to assist in swallowing their prey
- The male frog is smaller than his female mate
- A frog's tongue is covered with a sticky mucus to assist it when catching prey
- The general life span of a frog is 4 to 15 years depending upon the species
- Tadpoles are vegetarian and only eat plants
- The collective noun for frogs is Army

Unfortunately frogs are declining in numbers throughout Australia generally due to;

- loss of habitat
- introduced species (which either eat them or destroy their habitat)
- introduced chemicals and herbicides

So in order to maintain frog populations we all need to consider these aspects in our day to day activities.

The frogs I have found on my property are all common to the area. I have come across them generally whilst digging soil or moving logs which have been in close contact with the soil for a long period.



Eastern Banjo Frog or Pobblebonk Frog

These grow up to 70mm long. Their call is a distinct and sharp Bonk sound at approximately 1 second intervals. The back of the Pobblebonk is rough and warty. Some people think this warty appearance designates them as toads but this is not the case, many frogs have a warty appearance..



Southern Brown Tree Frog

These grow up to 60mm long. Their call is a long series (5-15) of rapid notes (or trill) the first note being extended like creeeeeeeeeeee cree cree cree.



Lesueur's Tree Frog or Stoney Creek Frog

These grow to about 55 mm.. Their call is a short soft trill rapidly repeated like Creww crewwk crewwwwk.

These photos are of frogs on my property. Colours and markings can vary from area to area.

I have never found either of the above Tree frogs in a tree. Has anyone ??

What frogs do you have about your place. Email details and photographs for publication in the newsletter so we can all share in your experience.

If you go to Frogs.org.au website this gives details of all the frogs for our region. It also has recordings of their sounds which can help you identify which frogs you hear about your place.

What happened to the frog's car when his parking meter expired? He got toad.

Landcare is about protecting and restoring our environment to allow all forms of nature (fauna and flora) to survive in harmony and balance. I do not claim to be an expert on Flora and Fauna but have based this article on my own experiences and readings on the subject.

So as part of the Bingi Landcare newsletter, with each publication, I aim to contribute an article on a species of either fauna or flora which is indigenous to our area to stimulate interest in our native flora and fauna.

In addition I also invite everyone to forward their own experiences and photographs so these can be shared with other members by including them in the newsletter.

Your contributions can be emailed direct to me at jd@incitegraphics.com.au or to Kaye Proudley at katbingi@harboursat.com.au

(Author John McClumpha, Hedley Range Road, June 2011)