

WINTER 2021

As Frogs Victoria turns three, I once again want to thank everyone for their continued love and encouragement, especially in these times such as they are. We and the frogs we know are ever grateful for your support.

We've got some great articles for you (as usual!) this issue – Dani Wallace tells the story of the night she heard Giant Burrowing Frogs calling in East Gippsland, a debrief from our AGM plus our new feature “Frogs On” event calendar. If you think we've missed something, please let us know, we're always keen to advertise frog-community affairs.

As always, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any ideas, questions, or suggestions. I hope to see you all soon at an event, be it online or otherwise.

Thanks for your ongoing support.

For the frogs,
Lynette Plenderleith, Pobblebonk Editor

FROGS ON IN VICTORIA

September

2 - [Complexity of visual and vocal communication in the Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog \(*Litoria fallax*\) among genetic, ecological and social constraints](#) – Talk by Dr Bhagya Herath; Online; Frogs Victoria

15 - [Conserving Growling Grass Frogs around Melbourne](#) – Talk by Dr Geoff Heard; Online; Victoria Nature Festival

October

7 - [The Effects of Climate Change on Frog Development, Physiology and Immunity](#) – Talk by Dr Laura Brannelly; Elgin Inn (or online); Frogs Victoria



Got an upcoming event? Submit it to pobblebonk@frogsvic.org and we'll include it next time!

CONGRATULATIONS DR JANE MELVILLE AM

Maggie Haines

Congratulations to Dr Jane Melville for becoming a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) as part of the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Dr Melville is a Senior Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrates at Museums Victoria and was recognised for significant service to herpetological research and the museums sector.

Jane has conducted research all over the globe, ranging from catching lizards in Kazakhstan to CT scanning museum specimens in Berlin to monitoring frogs in East Gippsland. Jane is a prolific writer, authoring 75+ publications, including papers on frog conservation genetics, and been cited 2600+ times. She has supervised numerous students, many of which have gone on to work in museums.

Jane is not only an incredible researcher but also a caring mentor and mother, who will continue to shape the world of herpetology for years to come.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WRAP-UP

A massive thanks to everyone who turned out for the AGM!

This year we created an events sub-committee – Steph Versteegan and Teisha Sloane-Lay - a whole team to run Frogs Victoria events. Of course COVID has had different plans for us than the ones we discussed, but we are looking forward to doing some of it, sometime!

If you want to read the minutes, check them out at www.frogsvic.org/agm

Most of the committee was re-elected and Maggie Haines was welcomed as the newest (Extra)Ordinary Member. More details about the committee (and how you can join!) can be found at www.frogsvic.org/committee

2021 Elected Committee

President: Lynette Plenderleith

Vice President: Nick Clemann

Secretary: Colin McHenry

Treasurer: David De Angelis

(Extra)Ordinary Member: Matt Clancy

(Extra)Ordinary Member: Maggie Haines

Events Sub-committee: Steph Versteegan, Teisha Sloane-Lay



REPORTING VICTORIAN FROG MORTALITY

In light of recent frog mortality events in NSW and QLD, frog and disease researchers are keen for the public to report dead frogs found in Victoria.

Pam Whiteley at the University of Melbourne Wildlife Disease Surveillance program can be [notified of dead frogs](#) (or phone 0400119301). Go to www.frogsvic.org/mortality for more info, including resources for wildlife carers and vets from Wildlife Health Australia.



If you have concerns about dead or dying frogs in Vic, you can help the investigation! Go to www.frogsvic.org/mortality for more info.

POPULATION OF A THREATENED FROG SPECIES DISCOVERED IN FAR-EAST GIPPSLAND

Dani Wallace

While many of us are in lockdown, let me take you on a journey deep into the forests of East Gippsland. On this particular night, I was conducting surveys for the Forest Protection Survey Program, part of the work of the Conservation Regulator in the Department of the Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP). The bush was burnt in the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires, and I was not very hopeful that we would find *any* animals, let alone something very special.

After a hard slog through emerging eucalyptus saplings and burnt undergrowth, my workmate, Jess, and I arrived at our survey destination covered in ash. As a frog lover, it is not unusual for me to have frog calls bouncing around in my head. But suddenly, my frog senses picked up. I *thought* I had heard the soft, owl-like call of a very special frog. It happened so quickly, and the call was so quiet, that at first I didn't trust what I had heard. People don't just stumble across incredibly rare frogs by accident. Just when I had resigned myself to the fact that I was indeed a crazy person that imagines frog calls, I heard the call again. I immediately radioed Jess and admitted, 'I could be crazy, but I think I just heard a Giant Burrowing Frog.'

I practically flew down to the nearby creek, and waited a few, painstaking minutes in the darkness. But slowly, and softly at first, a Giant Burrowing Frog (also known as the Southern Owl Frog), *Heleioporus australiacus flavopunctatus*, began to call from almost at my feet. As time went on, more and more frogs joined the chorus until at least five Giant Burrowing Frogs were, 'bo-bo-bo-bo'-ing all around me. Giant Burrowing Frogs spend most of their time underground, and only emerge after heavy rain to breed. Earlier in the year, we had conducted targeted surveys for these frogs at all of the locations they had historically been detected and found no evidence of them. As I held one of these rare and beautiful giant burrowing frogs in my hands, I was so overwhelmed that I became emotional.

Although the frogs had survived the fire, there was no guarantee that they would breed successfully. The warmer weather in Gippsland was drying up the pools Giant Burrowing Frogs breed in, and I was worried their tadpoles would not survive. This sparked a rescue mission by researchers and amphibian experts from DELWP's Arthur Rylah Institute and Zoos Victoria, who ventured back into the burnt Gippsland bush and collected over 100 Giant Burrowing Frog tadpoles. These tadpoles were the beginning of the first ever captive breeding program for Giant Burrowing Frogs. Under the care and expertise of Zoos Victoria, the tadpoles have developed swimmingly in captivity and some have now grown into baby frogs, or metamorphs. The members of Team Giant Burrowing Frog (Nick Clemann, Zak Atkins, Deon Gilbert, Adam Lee and Damian Goodall) have helped achieve an amazing conservation outcome for this species. We hope that these Giant Burrowing Frogs will help bolster the wild population, to ensure the survival of this wonderful species into the future.



*Dani Wallace holding an endangered Giant Burrowing Frog
(image: Conservation Regulator Forest Protection Survey Program)*

Dani works as a field ecologist at Wildlife Unlimited in Bairnsdale and is a PhD student in the One Health Research Group at the University of Melbourne. Her PhD project looks at the effect of the amphibian chytrid fungus on frog behaviour and reproduction. Find her on Twitter @daniwallace95 or @OneHealthRes or on Instagram: @dani_k_Wallace

FROGGY FAQs: I WANT TO BUILD A FROG POND, WHERE CAN I GET TADPOLES?

Lynette Plenderleith

Building a frog pond or frog bog is a great idea! Habitat loss or modification is one of the biggest threats to frogs and providing some extra habitat for them on your property could be a great way to help them! There are some great guides around – [Melbourne Water has one](#) and the [ABC's Gardening Australia has several!](#)

But what about the frogs?



All native frog species are protected by law in Australia

It's not a good idea to move frogs or tadpoles - there's no legal (or safe, from their perspective) way to artificially move frogs to your ponds. Moving frogs or tadpoles can spread diseases along with them (which is another of the main threats that frogs face!) and it could be cruel or interfere with the genetics of local populations to introduce frogs from elsewhere to an area that might not be suitable for them.

The good news though, is that frogs regularly travel more than a kilometre! If there are frogs nearby with enough habitat (not necessarily water - just garden vegetation is often enough) for them to move through to get to your pond they might colonise over time (it might take up to a year or two...). You can also increase the chance of that happening by not keeping fish or removing any non-native fish that are living in your ponds (goldfish and koi, and many other species, eat frog's eggs and tadpoles).

Got a frog pond or frog bog? Share your story with us! Email pobblebonk@frogsvic.org



*A garden pond is a great way to increase available habitat for frogs.
It could be a large farm dam, a small ornamental pool, or even just a wet patch.*

Lynette is co-founder and President of Frogs Victoria. She has a PhD in frog ecology and works as a science communicator. Find her on Instagram or Twitter @netteplenders

THREATENED SPECIES BAKE OFF

Threatened Species Day is September 7th. The Threatened Species Bake Off aims to build awareness in the community about Australia's remarkable and unique threatened wildlife.

This year, Frogs Vic committee member Teisha baked the life cycle of the Alpine Tree Frog, *Litoria verreauxii alpina*. Alpine Tree Frogs are listed as critically endangered in Victoria and is threatened by pests, habitat loss, climate change and diseases.

Find instructions on how to throw your chef's hat into the ring [here](#).



GOT MEMBERSHIP?

Frogs Vic membership fees:

- Pay for speakers' dinners, drinks and gift
- Pay Frogs Vic admin costs (including Zoom registration for online meetings)

Thanks to everyone that supports us financially. We could not continue to operate without you!

If you are not a member and would like to help support Frogs Vic, it's easy to sign up at www.frogsvic.org/get-involved Current pricing is \$30 Full Membership / \$15 Concession.

SHOW US YOUR FROGS!

Have you got an idea for a talk? It doesn't have to be scientific, it doesn't have to be long, it just has to be about frogs!

We are looking for speakers for 2022 and would love to see you talk. Please email events@frogsvic.org

THE FROGS ARE CALLING YOU

Frogs Vic is collaborating with Department of the Environment, Land, Water and Planning to run a citizen science program in regional Victoria.

If you live in or travel to northern or western Victoria, you are eligible to join in! More information can be found at www.frogscalling.org.

Have something you'd like to contribute to Pobblebonk? If you have an idea for a newsletter article, or a photo you'd like us to include, please email the editor: ed@frogsvic.org

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