

Frogwatch update

Hello lovely Frogwatchers- hope you are doing well and – no – I will not mention the C-word!! I think we all had more than enough of it.

So many wonderful things have happened over the past few months. Streets are quieter, the air is fresher, Canberra's beautiful parks and reserves have been discovered by many new fans, gardening has come to an all-time high, and push bike sales have gone through the roof. It has been wonderful to see masses of people, families, dog walkers, cyclists etc. out and about each day. Houses and gardens look schmicko and the Green Shed, the tip and the green waste facilities are in overdrive. Check out [this wonderful article on positive effects of the pandemic](#) from the Guardian.

I do hope we will hold on to many of these new formed habits for good, and will always remember that being connected to friends, family, neighbours and like-minded people is so very important and that having less is not a bad thing!!

But there is one thing that I hardly ever can get enough of: RAIN



The **recent solid rainfalls** have finally made a difference at empty or nearly empty wetlands!! Many ponds had been dry for the past two years, with sporadic rains merely softening the cacked mud. What a relief to see the water level rising and covering the dried and caked soil at last. Life seems to have returned to these wetlands, with mini-beasts hatching out of dormant eggs, plants growing from hidden seeds and the landscape turning from brown to green again.

Roger Hnatiuk even “caught” a keen spotted burrowing frog – [Neobatrachus sudellae](#), in action. The species was frolicking in a pond at the Arboretum, along with *Crinia signifera*, *Crinia parinsignifera* and *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* after >30mm of rain. Check out its call on [this recording](#), starting at 1:04!

Not much is known about this species as it spends most of its life underground, only coming up after substantial rain that soaks through the soil, to mate and forage, before digging down again. So keep your ears open when walking past wetlands after heavy rains- you might be able to hear this species and take a recording of its call. This will help collecting valuable data about its distribution to our data base. I am always keen on more sightings of this species!

Please note: the spotted burrowing frog had a bit of a scientific name change over the past years- with a wonderful story attached to it (see further below).

Heavy rains or not, we definitely need the forecasted autumn and winter rains to fully replenish our wetlands and water ways in preparation for the spring frog breeding frenzy and the FrogCensus activities! The past few years have been much too dry and warm, and have taken a toll not only on our local frogs but also on many other animal and plant species.

Speaking of the FrogCensus

The 2018 FrogCensus report is now published on the webpage- [check out the new format](#)- less words more action!!

The 2019 FrogCensus report is just about there. I am just waiting for some last minute signing off on the layout before I can put it onto the webpage.



A huge thank you to **Nat O'Rourke** for using his amazing magic and skills to produce the maps in both reports! They have added so much value to the reports!

The 2020 FrogCensus will go ahead as planned- at least it looks very much like it. Training will kick off in late September to get volunteers into shape for a full month of survey fun. The big aim is to have all active FrogWatch sites monitored at least twice during October, in nights of favourable conditions- which are: mild, still nights after some rain. Over the next months I will create an online list of active FrogWatch sites, so that you can sign up for your favourite sites. Will let you know when this is available.

Cannot wait until the FrogCensus?

Good news is, that you can now submit frog calls from any place in the capital region and at any time to the Canberra Nature Map's main webpage: <https://canberra.naturemapr.org/> . The CNM's capacity has recently been extended to allow audio recordings as well as photo references. The difference between FrogWatch surveys and frog sightings are listed in the table below.

While the annual FrogCensus surveys at established FrogWatch sites will always be our main focus, I strongly encourage all FrogWatch volunteers and CNM users to submit additional sightings throughout the year to add much needed data on frog distribution in the Capital Region. It is also a good way of practicing your frog ID skills and to create your own frog-sound map of your local area.

We do hope to use this function in the near future to run targeted activities, including the whole of the Canberra Nature Map community!

	FrogWatch portal in the CNM	CNM main webpage
Observation type	Survey	Sighting
Additional data needed	Yes, compulsory	No
Timing of observations	First 3 hours after dark	Any time
Place of observation	Established FrogWatch sites only	Anywhere in the Capital region
Training needed	FrogWatch Training seminar compulsory	None
Web address	https://frogwatch-act.naturemapr.org/	https://canberra.naturemapr.org/
Recording needed	Yes (3 min.)	Yes, short duration (30 sec.)
Who is doing the ID?	FrogWatch Coordinator	FrogWatch Coordinator

Frog of the month

If you happen to be out after dark, you might the soft call of the Whistling Tree frog- *Litoria verreauxii*.

When you hear its soft repeating "cree...cree...cree...cree...cree..." you know why it is called "whistling". I have heard it plenty of times over the past 3 weeks in the West-Belconnen area, near woodlands at the urban interface of Dunlop, Fraser, MacGregor, Higgins and Holt.



Other projects

2020 Tadpole Kits for Schools Program

Based on current trajectories, the 2020 [Tadpole Kits for Schools Program](#), funded by Icon Water, will go ahead as planned. The online booking process will open up at the start of Term 3. Due to the very high demand a maximum number of kits per school will be introduced this year.

Climate Change write-up

This will be one of the top three tasks for the coming year- publishing the results from the [2015-2018 Climate Change projects](#), funded by the ACT Government. Sooo many numbers to crunch, it is not funny. Martin Westgate (ANU) is currently working on a first draft and the FrogWatch Climate Change team, including Will Osborne, Danswell Starrs and Ben Scheele, will take it from there. Stay tuned!

Bio-Indicator write-up

Number two on the hot topic list for this year. The data of the 2018 study, funded by the ACT Government is currently being squeezed through an R-code, which means it will be analysed and compared to the results of the 2015 Bio-Indicator study – you can read more about this project [here](#).

TRARC study, CEP grant

This study, in partnership with the GCG Waterwatch Coordinator Bruno Ferronato, will be looking at habitat preferences of turtles and frogs in isolated versus more connected wetlands across the northern part of Canberra. Based on recent restrictions we had no choice but to delay the project for a few months to keep the citizens part of this exciting citizen science project! If you have a keen interest in turtles, please let us know as we will need lots of helping hands, once we can hit the road!!

Upgrade of the Canberra Nature Map (CNM) FrogWatch portal

CNM had undergone a massive upgrade of its online platform, thanks to the tireless efforts of Aaron and Rohan, and many others involved! Frogwatch will follow suit soonish. We are currently working on a list of much needed enhancements of the platform and I am keen to hear your wishes and suggestions, as you are the front-line users. Please send me an email to frogwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au if anything that could further improve the FrogWatch data portal comes to your mind!

New office space

Just before the introduction of tighter restriction and the 1.5m rule, Fiona, Bruno and I embarked on a face lift for our old and tired office. What a few new pieces of furniture and a lick of paint can achieve!! The result is looking great and we now have much more space and an extra work station. Our whole building is still locked for the public but we soon might be able to engage in face to face meetings at the office; with prior arrangement, one person at a time, and while keeping to the physical distancing rules. We might even provide fancy headwear as recently spotted in Germany to help with “personal space” requirements.



Once we are back to normal we could use a helping hand with sorting our library. Many items from the previous inventory have been discarded as they were no longer relevant or outdated. Updating the inventory and sorting the items in a meaningful order would be a wonderful contribution to our work. If this could be the right thing for you, please let me know!!

Upcoming event- not to be missed!!

As part of the Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA), Michael Mulvaney will be presenting a free online talk this Thursday evening on the role of citizen science in post fire monitoring. If you haven't yet heard Michael speak about his impressive work on Canberra Nature Map, among other things, I recommend you tune in. Signing up is free- just use this link

<https://www.facebook.com/events/844473825962128/>

Game changer, Name changer

From this time forward FrogWatch will use the name *Neobatrachus sudellae* instead of *N. sudellii*. Roger Hnatiuk, a very active FrogWatch volunteer that has taken quite a fancy of this cryptic species, unearthed the interesting finding of the Australian herpetologist Glenn Shea about the misnaming of this frog species by Joseph Lamb in 1911. Lamb named the species after his half-sister and mistakably neglected the female ending of the species name required in this case. To read more about this go to



<https://www.qm.qld.gov.au/~media/Documents/QM/About+Us/Publications/Memoirs+-+Nature/N56-1/n56-1-shea-note.pdf>

G.M. Shea (2012): Emendation of the specific name of the frog *Neobatrachus sudelli* (Lamb, 1911) (Anura: Myobatrachidae). *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Nature* 56 (1).

What a great find- thanks to Roger Hnatiuk!!! Go Roger GO!

And this leads nicely into my "last but not least" topic- **National volunteer week!!** A great series of events were held (online) over the past week to highlight and celebrate the countless contributions volunteers across the country make every day. **This includes YOU!**

I would also like to thank you all for being part of this **culture of giving** and for contributing to the FrogWatch program or to other Natural Resource Management programs in one of many possible ways. Thank you so much for undertaking surveys, helping with office work, cataloguing, proof reading, assisting with data analysis, "hunting" frogs with me in freezing cold and wet conditions, coming up with ideas and suggestions on how to further improve the program, promoting the program, supporting public events, dispatching tadpole kits, sharing your knowledge, preparing FrogCensus kits, sewing and so many other activities!!

I truly could not do it without you!

With this heart-felt sentiment I sign off for now

Enjoy whatever you do! Stay safe, warm and most of all happy!! Big smiles from the FrogLady

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