FROGCALL

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NEWSLETTER No. 195 FEBRUARY 2025

Notaden bennettii **Pilliga NSW Photo: Rhys Cairncross**

You are invited to our FATS meeting. It's free. Everyone is welcome.

THE MEETING VENUE MAY CHANGE IN 2025

Arrive from 6.30 PM or a 7 PM start.

Friday 7 February 2025

FATS meets at the Education Centre, Bicentennial Pk, Sydney Olympic Park

Easy walk from Concord West Railway Station and straight down Victoria Ave. Take a torch in winter.
By car: Enter from Australia Ave at the Bicentennial Park main entrance, turn off to the right and drive through the park. It's a one way road. Turn right into P10f car park.
Or enter from Bennelong Rd/Parkway. It's a short stretch of two way road. Turn left. Park in P10f car park, the last car park before the Bennelong Rd. exit gate.

FATS MEETING 7PM FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2025

6.30 PM Lost frogs seeking forever homes: Please join FATS on the night or bring your membership card. There is a $50 cash donation, if you wish to adopt a frog - to cover frog care costs. **The option to use CREDIT CARDS will recommence mid 2025.** Your NSW NPWS amphibian licence must be sighted on the night, if adopting a frog. Rehomed frogs can never be released into your garden or "the wild". Contact us before the night and FATS will confirm if any rescue frogs are ready to rehome.

7.00 PM Welcome and announcements

8.30 PM Main speakers are Rhys Cairncross and Hugh Speck presenting: "The cryptics part 1: Ongoing research into Australia's understudied frogs"

9.30 PM Show us your frog images. Tell us about your frogging trips or experiences. Relax and chat with frog friends and experts. Guessing competition, supper and frog adoptions continue.

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PRESIDENT'S PAD

I want to warmly welcome all our members to the first FrogCall of 2025. I hope you've all had a safe and enjoyable holiday break. FATS has had an exciting and productive couple months to close out 2024 and start the new year. The biannual Smiths Lake field trip was held in November 2024 where good weather produced no shortage of frogs, snakes, birds, and other wonderful wildlife for us to discover and learn about.

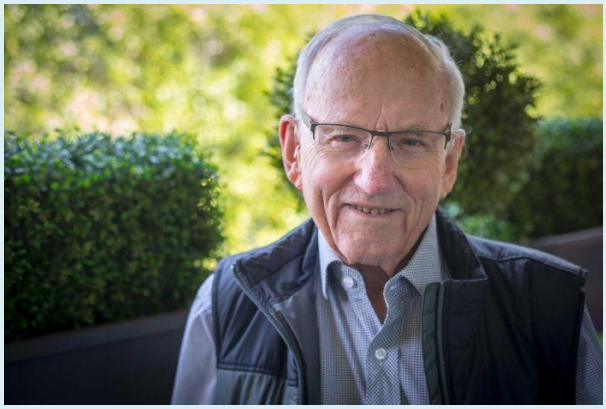
The final FATS meeting of the year was held in December 2024 and doubled as a Christmas celebration, featuring an interesting speaker, awards for the Frog-o-graphic photo competition, a raffle, lucky door prize, and plenty of refreshments.

Arthur White and a dedicated team of FATS members have been working hard to maintain the Green and Golden Bell Frog habitat conservation area at Greenacre, in partnership with Strathfield Council. Their efforts are to be commended. Additionally, FATS has been actively engaging with the community to promote frog conservation, delivering talks to schools and community groups, and supporting council events.

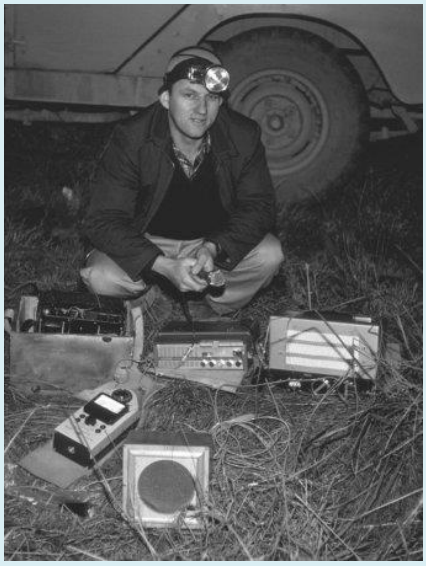
2025 is already off to a busy start! Our new committee is finding its rhythm, working hard to keep everything running smoothly, while also aiming to make some positive improvements. We're excited to be working on a new website and updating our membership process to make things easier, including accepting electronic payments. There's so much to look forward to in 2025. I'm excited that you are all along for the ride. I hope to see many of you at our upcoming meetings and field trips.
Sincerely, **Michelle Toms, FATS President**

FATS may attend the Sydney Royal Frog and Reptile Show - Last 2 days, Mon. 21 and Tue. 22 April 2025
https://wildexpo.com.au/eastershow/

VALE DR MURRAY LITTLEJOHN



"The FrogID team are incredibly sad to hear about the passing of Dr Murray John Littlejohn, on 12/10/2024, a legend in Australian frog research and a pioneer in the field of frog bioacoustics. During his career, Murray made great advancements in our understanding of Australia's frogs, paving the way for studies of frog bioacoustics (and FrogID!), and advancing our understanding frog species richness, distributions, evolution and conservation. Indeed, Murray was so ahead of his time that he was recording frog calls before commercial audio recorders were available, having to get a recording device built, which weighed in at 17kg and filled the back of a car! Murray will be greatly missed but his enormous contribution in understanding and conserving Australia's frogs will last forever. "
Frog ID Team



Murray's recording frog calls began in the 1950s.

Very sad news indeed.
What an amazing scientist and a great legacy
of scientific knowledge he has shared with us.

FATS may have a few copies of the final issue of
The Australian Herpetological Society's
Herpetofauna Journal left,
at $18 each - whilst stocks last.

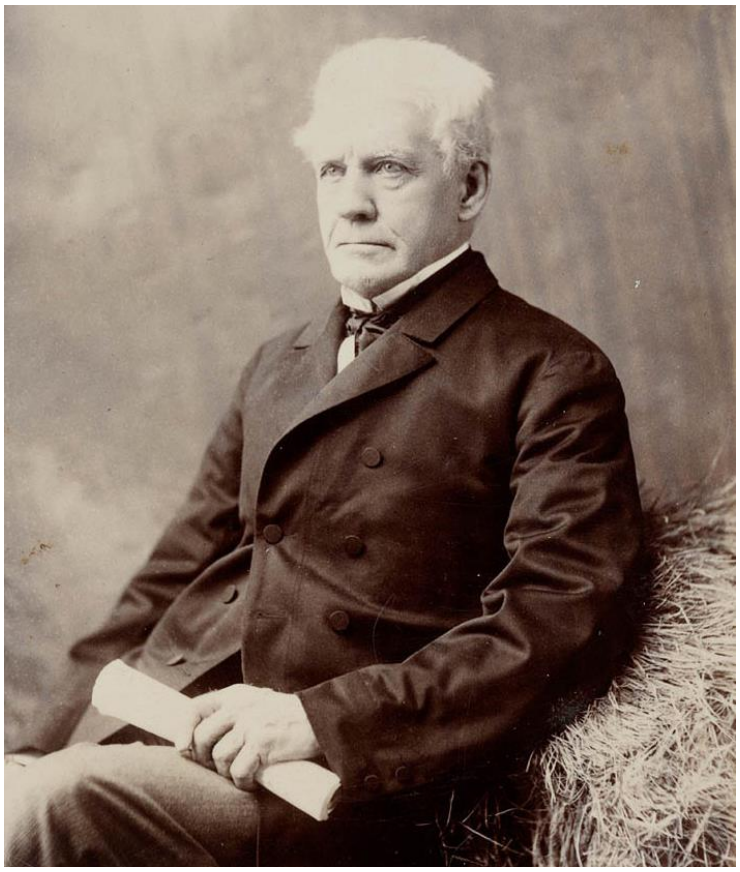
DR GEORGE BENNETT AND HIS EPONYMOUS FROG, *NOTADEN BENNETTII*

Glenn M. Shea, Sydney School of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, and Australian Museum Research Institute, Australian Museum, 1 William Street, Sydney, NSW 2010.

The Crucifix Frog or Holy Cross Frog, *Notaden bennetti*, is one of the most unusual and spectacular members of the Australian frog fauna. A burrowing species that emerges to the surface after rain to feed primarily on ants (Barker & Grigg, 1977) and occasionally termites (Anstis, 2013), it has a bright and almost jewel-like coloration, lime green to sulphur yellow studded with glossy black, white and red tubercles (below) that makes it very conspicuous during its short periods of surface activity. The species was described by Albert Günther of the British Museum in May 1873, based on material from the Castlereagh River, sent to London by Gerard Krefft of the Australian Museum, although Günther (1873) also quoted Krefft as saying that "it has been also observed near Fort Bourke". Although Günther (1873) gave no indication that he was working with more than a single specimen, Boulenger (1882) listed two specimens from the Castlereagh River, one donated by the Australian Museum (where Krefft was curator), the other donated by Bennett (who was a Trustee of the same institution), but identified only the specimen donated by the Australian Museum as the type of the species. Parker (1940) listed both specimens, which were registered at the British Museum on the same day (30 April 1873) as cotypes. Günther stated that he named the species "after Dr. G. Bennett, to whom we are indebted for many specimens of the greatest interest". But who was Dr. G. Bennett, and what is the connection with the frog that now bears his name?

Notaden bennettii **Brewarrina Photo: G. Shea**

Dr George Bennett, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and Fellow of the Linnean Society, is a significant figure in Australian zoology and medicine, and is the subject of several biographic studies (Plarr, 1930; Coppleson, 1955a,b; Chisholm, 1966; Hickie, 2012). The following biographic account draws heavily from these sources, with referencing only provided for additional information or corrections to those previous publications.



George Bennett aged about 76
Photo: John Tangelder Gorus,
***ca* 1880 State Library of NSW PXA1023, public domain**

George Bennett was born on 31 January 1804, in Plymouth in England, the eldest child of William Lang Bennett and Elizabeth Debell. His father was an organist, but both George and his younger brother Frederick Debell Bennett (1806–1859) gained medical qualifications. The young George had a taste for travel and the sea, and at age 15, he sailed to Sri Lanka and Mauritius. On his return he studied medicine, first as an apprentice, then enrolling at Middlesex Hospital and at the Hunterian School of Medicine in London, gaining his diploma of membership of the Royal College of Surgeons on 7 March 1828. As a young medical student, George came to know Richard Owen, just a few months younger than George, and their friendship would last for the remainder of their lives.

Owen would give up medicine to become one of the major comparative anatomists in England, receiving his membership of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1826, becoming assistant curator of the College's Hunterian Museum in 1827, lecturer in comparative anatomy at St Bartholemew's Hospital in 1828, promoted to the foundation Chair of Comparative Anatomy there in 1834, in 1836 elected as Hunterian Professor of the Royal College of Surgeons and in 1849 the conservatorship of the Hunterian Museum (it helped that he married the daughter of the previous conservator, William Clift in 1835) (Owen, 1894).

continued on pages 4 to 10.

Owen had a reputation for tolerating no competition, and his activities to suppress recognition of local palaeontologists and anatomists like Gideon Mantell and Thomas Huxley while simultaneously promoting his own work are well-known, along with his development of a network of influential patrons, extending as high as Queen Victoria (Günther, 1975; Desmond, 1982; Cadbury, 2000). In 1856, starting to have difficulties at the Royal College of Surgeons, he became superintendent of the natural history collections of the British Museum, and began lobbying for the separation of the natural history collections into an independent collection, naturally with Owen in charge. This would make him independent of his superior at the British Museum, the autocratic Chief Librarian Sir Anthony Panizzi, and also having control over the Keepers of the various natural history departments, including the irascible John Edward Gray, the Keeper of Zoology. The result was a new set of internal enemies to battle.

The development of Owen's fame was inextricably linked to Bennett as a source of specimens, and it was possibly these links, together with Bennett spending most of the rest of his life in Australia, that resulted in them remaining friends throughout their lives (unlike many of Owen's colleagues), although the relationship was greatly unequal, Owen gaining more from it than Bennett (Newland, 1991).

Shortly after completing his medical degree, Bennett set off on his second voyage, sailing as a supernumerary surgeon aboard the ship *Sophia*, a convict transport ship bound for Australia. After arriving in Sydney on 17 January 1829, Bennett spent several weeks travelling in New South Wales, and became interested in two questions in mammalian anatomy: reproduction of kangaroos, and the mode of reproduction of the platypus. His interest in the platypus, in particular, had been piqued when Owen showed him the extent of the mammary glands despite nipples being absent (Owen (1832a) would publish his observations a few years later).

The *Sophia* departed Sydney on 14 March 1829 (Anonymous, 1829) with Bennett aboard, and spent the following two years travelling around Pacific Oceania, including time in New Zealand, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Tahiti and Hawaii, allowing Bennett plentiful opportunities to make collections and natural history observations. The *Sophia* returned to England in 1831, and Bennett lost no time in publishing many of his observations in British scientific journals. However, his greatest contribution from this voyage was the collection of a living Pearly Nautilus (*Nautilus pompilius*) in Vanuatu, the first complete specimen seen in Europe since the beginning of the 18th century. The specimen was sent to Owen at the Royal College of Surgeons, and it was Owen's monograph on the anatomy of the species (Owen, 1832b) that established his reputation as a comparative anatomist. In 1832, Bennett would also become a Corresponding Member of the Zoological Society and was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society.

On 4 May 1832, Bennett left England for his third voyage, as surgeon aboard the ship *Brothers*. He arrived in Sydney on 21 August 1832. Within a few weeks of arrival, he travelled to the Bathurst region and then south to the Goulburn Plains, followed by a second trip to the Yass Plains in search of platypus to try to resolve the rumours that it was oviparous. He was successful in obtaining specimens, along with pregnant female kangaroos, and promptly sent the dissected specimens to Owen for further study (via the *Brothers*, departing Sydney on 4 February 1833). Bennett himself departed Sydney aboard the *Sir Thomas More* on 24 March 1833, voyaging through Java, Sumatra, Singapore and China, before returning to England on 5 May 1834.

In the following month, a two volume account of his travels, nominally about his third voyage, but including some incidents from his second voyage, was published, "*Wanderings in New South Wales, Batavia, Pedir Coast, Singapore, and China*" (Bennett, 1834a).

Owen published his observations on Bennett's platypus and kangaroo specimens in 1834 (Owen, 1834a,b), and it was these two publications that resulted in Owen's election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of London later that year (Owen, 1894). Bennett also published his observations on the natural history of the platypus in the scientific literature (Bennett, 1834b,1835), and his collections and writings resulted in his being awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1834.

However, on 18 March 1835, he left England again for Sydney, this time aboard the *Florentia*, arriving on 29 July 1835 (Anonymous, 1835), to take up the vacant curatorship of the Australian Museum, a position that Owen and his colleagues at the Royal College of Surgeons had lobbied for him to be appointed to. Shortly after arrival, he was asked by Governor Richard Bourke to investigate an outbreak of disease in the local sheep population that threatened to ruin the nascent wool industry. Bennett's report into the outbreak (Bennett *et al*., 1835) was detailed, but the nature of the disease, commonly referred to as catarrh, remained mysterious, and it disappeared by the late 1860s, never to return (Mylrea, 1992). It was not until later in 1835 that Bennett was able to commence work at the Museum. His starting salary of £200 was insufficient for his needs, and Bennett sought to also be appointed to the vacant directorship of the Botanic Gardens, but was unsuccessful in this. He was able to supplement the salary with part-time medical practice (Anonymous, 1839). When the salary of the curator was reduced to £100, he resigned to begin full-time practice, and would devote his energies to medicine until the 1850s.

As his practice and his esteem among his fellow physicians and surgeons grew, Bennett was invited to become one of the initial Board of Examiners in Medicine at the University of Sydney in 1856, and when the Faculty of Medicine there began to take undergraduate students in 1882, he was an active member of the Faculty, attending meetings and often chairing them.

Despite his undoubted skills as a surgeon and physician, Bennett's family life in Sydney was marred by repeated tragedies. He married his first wife, Julia Anne Luduvina da Silva Cameron, on 28 November 1835, and she bore him six children. Their first child, George Edward Owen, was born on 14 September 1836, but died the following month. Their second child, Caroline Esther, born on Christmas Day 1838, died 14 months later.

Their other four children, Amelia Gould, born 9 December 1840, Luduvina Eliza de Bell, born 16 July 1842, George Frederick, born 5 March 1844, and William Edward, born 7 August 1845, lived to adulthood. However, Julia suicided by drinking cyanide on 15 June 1846, with the inquest finding that her death was precipitated by stress over some unpaid bills. Bennett remarried on 10 December 1846, to Charlotte James Elliott (Anonymous, 1846), who bore him two children, a son Frederick Owen on 8 November 1847, and a daughter Emily Annette on 4 September 1849. Emily died aged 14 months on 6 November 1850. Charlotte died on 20 February 1853 of congestion of the brain. Bennett married his third wife, Sarah Adock, on 4 January 1854. They had two children, Charles Robert, born 9 February 1855 and Edward Harvey, born 19 April 1856 (Anonymous, 1855a, 1856). Both died in infancy, Charles on 9 February 1855, aged only ten days, and Edward on 27 January 1858 (Anonymous, 1855b, 1858).

Coinciding with, and possibly related to, the tragic loss of his second wife and some of his children, Bennett began to return to his natural history pursuits. In 1853, two other external factors coincided to further draw him back to natural history. He was appointed as one of the first Board of Trustees of the Australian Museum (he would remain a Trustee for the next two decades, becoming chairman in 1863, 1866 and 1873; Strahan, 1979), and he received a letter from William Hooker at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, asking for assistance in the development of the Kew Herbarium and Vegetable Garden.

Notaden bennettii **Nyngan NSW Photo: Grant Webster**

By this time, Bennett and his family were living in a large two-level house with a dozen rooms at Elizabeth Street, between Park and Bathurst Streets (Anonymous, 1842), although Coppleson (1955b) and Hickie (2012) report the address as 115 Elizabeth Street, on a site now occupied by the Wentworth Hotel, which is closer to Circular Quay. His first residence on returning to Sydney in 1835 was a smaller house on Spring Street, with the move coming in 1842 (Anonymous, 1842). The large Elizabeth Street house had sufficient space to operate as art gallery (Bennett had a close friendship with several local artists), museum and private zoo. He was known to have had at various times in the late 1850s several platypus, a jabiru, and four cassowaries from New Britain wandering around the house. Three of the cassowaries were eventually shipped to England, with Bennett's description of the first individual in a letter to his friend John Gould (Gould, 1857) becoming the basis for the description of the new species *Casuarius bennetti*.

On 14 March 1859, Bennett and his wife left Sydney for England aboard the *Emeu*, arriving on 27 May, along with many specimens for his friends and colleagues. While in Britain, he attended several scientific meetings, and received yet more honours, including an honorary Doctor of Medicine from Glasgow and Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons. While there, he also arranged for the publication of his next book, "*Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia"* (Bennett, 1860). They returned to Sydney on 12 November 1860 aboard the P.&O. ship *Jeddo* (Anonymous, 1860).

Shortly afterwards, he was elected a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London, which also awarded him their silver medal (1862).

Enthused by having attended a meeting of the Society for the Acclimatisation of Animals while in London, Bennett began to push for a similar organisation in Sydney immediately on his return. The New South Wales Acclimatisation Society commenced in 1861 with Bennett's support, and flourished for several years before ultimately being disbanded in 1871. At this time, he was also pushing for a silkworm industry and had interests in the development of citrus growing in the country.

His new association with the Australian Museum, which was actively trying to build its collection by exchange of specimens with other institutions, along with the positive response to Bennett's donation of his cassowaries to the Zoological Society of London resulted in a renewed interest by him to sending specimens, both alive and dead, back to England. With Owen's transfer to the British Museum, this institution became the recipient of many of his preserved specimens, while live animals were sent to the Zoological Society. The association with the Australian Museum also brought Bennett into close contact with Gerard Krefft, curator of the Australian Museum. Krefft had first been employed as Assistant Curator to Simon Rood Pittard in 1860, but with the latter's death, he was appointed to the vacant curatorship in 1862 (Strahan, 1979).

Among Krefft's many interests were the fossil mammals of Australia. In 1830, Sir Thomas Mitchell had discovered fossil deposits at Wellington Caves, and Bennett visited the caves for the first time in 1832. Additional fossil sites were discovered on the Darling Downs by Ludwig Leichhardt, and Owen, who had described several gigantic extinct mammals from the various collections, including *Diprotodon*, was keen to obtain more complete material to work with. Krefft, accompanied by Alexander Morrison Thompson, the recently-appointed Professor of Geology of the University of Sydney, travelled to Wellington Caves in 1869 and made large collections, many of which were sent to Owen (often as casts or photographs rather than trusting the original specimens to the long sea voyage to England). Bennett also offered to obtain material (Owen, 1870), and in 1871, he, accompanied by his son George Frederick, travelled to the Darling Downs to work at the deposits reported by Leichhardt.

They departed Sydney via the ship *Queenslander* on 3 November 1871 for Brisbane, then travelled from 9 November by coach and train to Dalby, Over the next three weeks, they visited a number of properties in the region, including Jimbour, Gowrie, Clifton, Halliford, Chinchilla and Warra Warra, then returning via Undulla, returning to Brisbane on 1 December. George Bennett departed Brisbane via the *City of Brisbane*, arriving back in Sydney on 6 December, while his son settled in Toowoomba, where he would become a public servant working for the Roads Department. During the trip, they also met and discussed with the local landowners the possibility of sending any fossils to Bennett in Sydney, and numerous specimens were sent by Bennett and his son to Owen at the British Museum between 1872 and 1880 (Lydekker, 1887). Owen's numerous papers on the extinct marsupials of Australia culminated in his enormous monographic treatise of 1877 (Owen, 1877), in which he repeatedly praises Bennett for his specimen contributions.

Krefft had taken to the Trustee's requests to build the collection and arrange exchanges with gusto. Large collections of specimens were sent to the British Museum and other European institutions. At first, care and attention were paid to documenting these, with the Annual Reports of the Australian Museum listing the specimens sent. However, Krefft gradually became disillusioned with many of the Trustees, who he felt were using the museum's facilities for their own benefit, while the Trustees in turn were increasingly frustrated with Krefft's intransigence in providing details to them. Documentation of the receipt and exchange of specimens became less reliable, and Krefft was eventually ousted from the museum in 1874 following several inquiries, both internal and by the government in which the Trustees brought multiple charges of inappropriate behaviour against him. Bennett was one of the few trustees who maintained support for Krefft (despite recognising his "injudicious" behaviour in a letter to Owen; Hickie, 2012) and when Krefft was shown the door, Bennett resigned from the Board of Trustees.

It was during this period of declining documentation that the type specimen of *Notaden bennettii* was sent to the British Museum.

Following the severing of his ties with the Australian Museum, Bennett continued to write on natural history topics, but again reverted largely to his medical work, even though he was 70 at the time he resigned from the museum's Board of Trustees. In 1870, when the new and expanded St Vincent's Hospital opened in Darlinghurst, he had joined the honorary medical staff at the hospital as its first consulting physician, and with his continuing work as a member of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney, was instrumental in St Vincent's Hospital becoming one of the initial three hospitals to become teaching hospitals associated with the University in 1883. This arrangement did not last long. In late 1884, a crisis developed due to a new appointment to the medical staff being made at the behest of the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, in violation of the principle of appointments being made only following public advertisement and selection of the best qualified applicant, this being part of the terms of agreement of the contract with the University of Sydney. On 9 December 1884, at a meeting chaired by Bennett, the entire consulting medical staff of the hospital resigned, leading to the University withdrawing the offer for St Vincent's to become an affiliated teaching hospital. This decision was not reversed until many years later.

The period between 1875 and 1881 also saw Bennett undertaking a few more trips away. In 1875, he visited Tasmania, Melbourne and Adelaide on a six week tour, departing Sydney on 21 March aboard the *Ellora*, and returning to Sydney on 4 May aboard the *Dandenong* (Bennett, 1879a-d). In 1877, Bennett and his wife commenced a world tour, visiting the USA, Canada, Europe and Asia. They departed from Sydney on 7 April 1877 aboard the *Zealandia* for San Francisco (Anonymous, 1877), finally returning aboard the *Siam* from the Sri Lankan port of Galle on 22 April 1879 (Anonymous, 1879). In 1881, aged 76, he and his wife visited New Zealand, departing Sydney on 22 January aboard the *Wakatipu* (Anonymous, 1881a) and returning on 14 March via the *Te Anau* (Anonymous, 1881b). It was possibly during this visit that Bennett visited Norfolk Island – Hickie (2012) notes the existence of an album of photographs by Bennett dated 1881 from Norfolk Island, but I can find no trace of Bennett among passenger lists of any of the few ships travelling between Sydney and Norfolk Island between 1880 and 1882.

With his reputation as a zoologist and physician long established, he was elected President of the New South Wales Zoological Society (the precursor to the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales) in 1882, and President of the Natural History Association (later the Field Naturalists' Society of New South Wales, and then the New South Wales Naturalists' Club, which would publish the *Australian Naturalist*) in 1888 and again in 1891. Finally, just before his 86th birthday, he was awarded the Clarke Memorial Medal of the Royal Society of New South Wales, in December 1890. George Bennett died of pneumonia at his home in Sydney (by then 167 William Street) on 29 September 1893, aged 89. He had outlived Richard Owen by nine months. He is buried in the Anglican section at Rookwood Cemetery, with a large monument by his widow.

Despite his travels, there is no record of Bennett visiting the Castlereagh River, and other than his visit to the Darling Downs in 1871, he seems to have spent the decade prior to the description of *Notaden bennettii* in 1873 without fieldwork anywhere beyond his local area in Sydney. Likewise, Krefft is not known to have collected in the Castlereagh River area, and George Masters, who operated as official Collector for the Australian Museum between 1864 and 1874, did not visit this region (Whitley, 1971).

So who did collect the two specimens of *Notaden bennettii* from the Castlereagh River?

In order for them to have been sent to London to be received by the British Museum before the end of April (the two specimens bear the registration numbers 73.4.30.6 and 73.4.30.17, i.e., the sixth and seventeenth specimens registered on 30 April 1873), and to have been described by Günther in a paper published in May 1873, they could not have been sent from Sydney any later than the end of January, even if they were sent by the fastest clippers of the era.

The period 1872–1873 marked the beginning of the declines in documentation of arrivals of specimens to the Australian Museum. Unlike the early part of Krefft's employment as Curator, when lengthy monthly lists of donations to the collection were regularly published in the local newspapers, the donation lists became much sparser and shorter, with many donations lists now covering two or even three months (April–May, July–August, September–October, November–December for 1872, and February–April, May–June, August–September and October–November for 1873), the November–December 1872 list not published until February 1873, and no January or July 1873 list published at all. However, in none of the donation lists between January 1872 and January 1873 are any frogs noted as donations. The Annual Reports for 1872 and 1873 (Bennett & Krefft, 1873; Scott & Robinson, 1875) also fail to note any frog donations other than specimens of *Litoria aurea* and *Pseudophryne australis* in 1873, which were donated in October–November (Anonymous, 1873a). Further, the Annual Report for 1872 notes only the donation of photographs and specimens of fossil and non-fossil marsupial skeletal elements to the British Museum, without any mention of frogs or reptiles (despite four reptile specimens from Krefft being registered there between 11–12 October that year: a python, *Antaresia childreni* from the Gulf of Carpentaria, registered as 72.10.11.3; the holotype of the skink *Eugongylus albofasciolatus*, 72.10.12.1; a death adder, *Acanthophis*, from the Gulf of Carpentaria, 72.10.124, and a brown-headed snake, *Glyphodon tristis* from NE Australia, 72.10.12.6). The Annual Report for 1873, which was not published until 1875, lacks any record of donations to other institutions "because the late Curator and Secretary has failed to record them" (Scott & Robinson, 1875).

Notaden bennettii **juvenile feeding on termites**
Photo: Marion Anstis

While Coppleson (1955b) provides transcriptions of the many letters sent by Bennett to Owen, often accompanying specimens being sent to Owen, there is a large gap in those letters between 1865 and August 1873. There are three letters in the archives of the Natural History Museum from Bennett to Günther (DF/ZOO/200/1/111–113) partially filling that gap, dated 26 January 1869, 15 April 1871, and 20 February 1873, which were not seen by Coppleson. While the date on the last of these is suspiciously close to the inferred date when the frogs could have been sent to London, the letter talks about other things, although it does mention sending specimens other than frogs to Günther by the ship *Parramatta*, which sailed 17 February 1873 (Anonymous, 1873b). However, that ship, one of the fastest clippers of the day, did not arrive at Gravesend, at the mouth of the Thames, until 23 May 1873 on that trip (Anonymous, 1873c).

Among the Krefft correspondence with the British Museum are seven letters between December 1872 and February 1873 (DF ZOO/200/4/258–259, 277–281) from Krefft to either John Gray or Albert Günther. Only two of these mention frogs. The first, to Günther on 2 December 1872, mentions a frog from the Castlereagh River (undoubtedly the *Notaden*). The second, to Günther on 25 January 1873, again talks about frogs from the Castlereagh River (undoubtedly *Notaden* again) along with one from Fort Bourke, described as of uniform coloration and only being sent for identification purposes (undoubtedly the type of *Cyclorana platycephalus*).

Comparing records of ships leaving Sydney for London through the pages of the *Evening News* (Sydney), and ships arriving at London from Sydney through the pages of the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* (London), there are only four possibilities for sailing ships to have left Sydney in December or January, and arriving in London by the end of April: the *Hawkesbury* departed Sydney on 7 December and arrived on 3 April; the *Strathdon* departed on 1 January and arrived on 26 April; the *Decapolis* departed on 31 December and arrived on 26 April, and the *Pethesilia*, which departed Sydney on 3 January and arrived on 30 April. The alternative was the faster service operating via the Royal Mail steamships, which connected with P.&O. ships that travelled via the Suez Canal and Southhampton (with a stop in Brindisi, allowing some mail to travel overland to reach London even faster for a higher cost). These services left Sydney at the end of each month, and the mail took about 6 weeks to reach London. The mail left aboard the R.M.S. *Bangalore* on 31 December 1872, and via the R.M.S. *Baroda* on 28 January 1873. The latter closely matches the second Krefft letter dated 25 January, and likely the frogs accompanied that letter as a small package.

Luckily, despite Krefft's unwillingness to keep the Board of Trustees advised on his activities, his passion for publicising the donations to the museum provides the answer to the source of the *Notaden* specimens. In the issue of the Sydney Morning Herald for 23 November 1872, nine days before Krefft's first letter to Günther mentioning the specimen, appears a short note:

"Mr. James Thompson, of Teridgerie, on the Castlereagh River, has forwarded to Mr. Krefft a new species of frog, which is perhaps the most vivid coloured of the tribe. It is of a bright yellowish-green above, covered by a cross, the upper part of which is split in two, reaching as far as each eye. The body is dotted with immense warts, forming spots of green, brown, black, white and red. The head is very small, the legs short and thick, and the colour beneath pale gray, with some black spots. It is certainly a very strange-looking amphibian, and will probably form the type of a new genus. The district from which this specimen comes is little known, and many animals new to science are said to exist there. It would be well worth exploring, if a little money could be spared for such a purpose by the Government. The animal travelled some 300 miles in a tin pill-box by post, and arrived safe in Sydney this morning" (Anonymous, 1872).

The same column, sometimes with the locality name mis-spelt as Teridgeril, appears in several other newspapers over the next few weeks. From the description, this is clearly *Notaden bennettii*.

Krefft's letter of 25 January provides the answer, noting that he had given one frog to Bennett ("von den Fröschen habe ich einem Bennett zugeben"), so two must have originally been sent to Krefft by Thompson, and Bennett must in turn have mailed his with Krefft's specimen to London. Of the two specimens, the one from Krefft is in much better condition (originally registered as 73.4.30.17, now reregistered as 1947.2.18.55) and was designated as lectotype by Cogger et al. (1983). Possibly the one given to Bennett had not survived the trip to Sydney.

The locality Teridgerie is still extant, about half-way between Coonamble and Baradine. The donor, James Thompson, remains a mysterious figure. He had been at Teridgerie from at least 1867, when he was made a local Sheep Director under the Diseases in Sheep Act of 1866 (Wilson, 1867), an act that was related in part to the spread of catarrh in sheep (the same disease that Bennett had been instrumental in characterising in 1835), and there are several notices in the NSW Government Gazette over the next seven years noting impoundment of stock and horses by Thompson at Teridgerie. He is also reported on several occasions to have been a Justice of the Peace (e.g., Anonymous, 1873d). A search of the Registers of Appointment of Justices of the Peace (State Records Authority of New South Wales series NRS-1026, files 5/3250–57) records James Thompson of Coonamble being appointed a J.P. in November 1870.

A newspaper account of the area in July 1873, a few months after the collection of the frog, notes:

"Teridgerie, twelve miles from Urawilkie, is a station lately belonging to Messrs J. F. and H. White, and capable, it is stated, of carrying from sixty to ninety thousand sheep, according to the season. It has been for many years under the management of James Thompson, Esq, J.P.; it is a magnificent property, one of the finest stations in the district, and has just changed hands, being sold with thirty thousand sheep at eighteen shillings per head to Mr. Murphy, a Victorian squatter." (Anonymous, 1873d).

The change of ownership to James Murphy junior took place in early July 1873 (Anonymous, 1873e). It seems that the change of ownership was not beneficial to Thompson. He abruptly appears from the news media at that time. In October that year, he resigned as a Sheep Director (Farnell, 1873), and in September1875, he was removed from the list of Justices of the Peace "in consequence of death or other causes" (Robertson, 1875). The entry in the Registers of Appointment of Justices of the Peace note that he resigned rather than his commission having lapsed due to death, although the date is not recorded. Unfortunately, with James Thompson being a common name, my search for his subsequent history has been unsuccessful.

A search of the NSW Births Deaths and Marriages register records the death in 1874 of a James Thompson, registered at Coonamble (where Thompson was often linked in the newspapers). The detailed death certificate (registration number 4561/1874) records the death as occurring on 19 October 1874 at Rocky Glen, 73km ESE of Teridgerie. However, this may be too early for the James Thompson of Teridgerie, as his resignation as a J.P. was only recorded in the second half of 1875.

It is unfortunate that we know no more about someone who first made known to science one of Australia's most spectacular frogs.

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FROGS VIC OCTOBER 2024 TALK

All are welcome at the Frogs Vic public meeting. No RSVP or registration is necessary. Diner and drinks (available to purchase) start at 6 pm . Talk starts at 7:30 pm upstairs at the Elgin Inn 75 Burwood Road, Hawthorn Victoria. Frog Vic has public meetings on the first Thursday of the month from March to November. November is traditionally a fun trivia night.

Australia is unfortunately home to dozens of invasive animal species. Some are relatively newly arrived like the Smooth Newt, while others like the Cane Toad are well established across large parts of the country. Drs Stephen Frankenberg and Ellen Cottingham presented their research on developing genetic biocontrols to eliminate these invasive amphibians in Australia.

Ellen Cottingham is a postdoctoral researcher in the School of BioSciences at the University of Melbourne, working to develop new tools to help control Australia's invasive species, including genetic biocontrols for the Cane Toad and Smooth Newt. The Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* in the United Kingdom, featured in our December FrogCall newsletter #194. In the UK and Europe, the native Smooth Newt is in decline and their potential extinction is a concern to environmentalists. In Australia the Smooth Newt, is an introduced species that unfortunately has entered the waterways in Victoria. There is concern that the feral population of Smooth Newts may have negative impacts on our native animals. Little appears to be done by the Victorian Government to erradicate it in the wild before it spreads into more state waterways. It is thought that these previous pet newts, were accidentally or purposely released into Victorian waterways in the 1920's and again later that century, possibly by careless owners. The dilemma remains, that the native Smooth Newt is a valued but threatened species in the UK and an introduced pest needing irradiation in Australia.

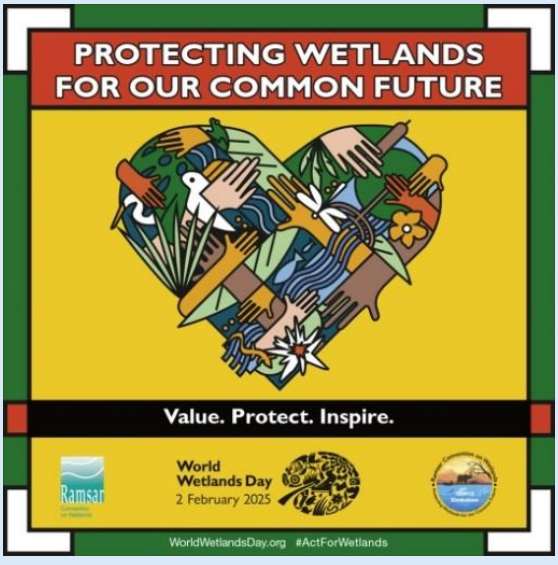
Stephen Frankenberg leads the group as a research fellow in the School, with most of his current research focussing on applying genetic engineering to solving problems in conservation and biodiversity, including genetic biocontrol for invasive pests, Cane Toad toxin resistance in Northern Quolls, and transgenic immunity to the amphibian chytrid fungus. See **https://vpmsymposium.com.au/base/wp-content/uploads/presentations2023/Stephen%20Frankenberg.pdf** Check out this brilliant video about gene drive explained by Stephen Frankenberg's 11-year-old niece

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3JqPYveNjk

Stephen and Ellen also collaborate with a team at Melbourne Museum that aims to biobank cryopreserved living cells from a wide range of Australian species as an insurance against future loss of biodiversity. Any researchers keen to contribute tissues or whole bodies from freshly dead frogs (kept refrigerated, *not frozen*, to keep cells alive) to aid this initiative can contact the collection manager Karen Robert at Melbourne Museum karoberts@museum.vic.gov.au or phone 03 8341 7449.

https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/

WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2 2 2025



The free FATS meeting commences at 7 PM, (arrive from 6.30 PM) and ends about 10 PM, at the Education Centre, Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush Bay. FATS meetings are usually held on the **first Friday of every EVEN month** February, April (**except Easter Friday**), June, August, October and December**. If the FATS meeting falls on Easter Friday, then the meeting will probably be one week earlier. Occasionally other meeting dates are changed. Please check our website and your emails for notices.** Call, check our web site, Facebook page or email us for further directions. We hold 6 informative, informal, topical, practical and free meetings each year. Visitors are welcome. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations, field studies and trips, have displays at local events, produce the newsletter FROGCALL and FROGFACTS information sheets. FATS exhibit at many community fairs and shows. Please contact Events Coordinator Kathy Potter if you can assist as a frog explainer, even for an hour. No experience required. Encourage your frog friends to join or donate to FATS. Donations help with the costs of frog rescue, student grants, research and advocacy. All expressions of opinion and information in FrogCall are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as an official opinion of the FATS Committee, unless expressly so stated. From 2025, credit cards can be used for raffle and other purchases over $10.

FATS ON FACEBOOK: FATS has almost 5,200 Facebook members and visitors worldwide. Posts vary from husbandry, disease and frog identification enquiries, to photos and posts about pets, gardens, wild frogs, research, new discoveries, jokes, cartoons, events and habitats, from all over the world. The page was created about 13 years ago and includes dozens of information files. Just keep scrolling to see them all. https://www.facebook.com/groups/FATSNSW/

RESCUED FROGS are at our meetings. Contact us if you wish to adopt a frog. A cash donation of $50 is appreciated to cover care and feeding costs. Our EFTPOS facility at the meeting is likely to be unavailable until later in 2025, due new FATS committee members. FATS must sight your current amphibian licence. NSW pet frog licences, can be obtained from the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (link below). Please join FATS before adopting a frog. This can be done at the meeting. Most rescued frogs have not had a vet visit unless obviously sick. Please take you new, formerly wild pet to an experienced herpetological vet for an annual check-up and possible worming and/or antibiotics after adoption. Some vets offer discounts for pets that were rescued wildlife.

https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/licences-and-permits/wildlife-licences/native-animals-as-pets/frog-keeper-licences

FATS has student memberships for $20 annually with electronic FrogCall, but no hard copy mail outs.
https://www.fats.org.au/membership-form

Thank you to the committee members, FrogCall supporters, talented meeting speakers, Frog-O-Graphic competition entrants, event participants and organisers including David, Kathy and Harriet Potter, Sarah and Ryan Kershaw. The FrogCall articles, photos, media and webpage links, membership administration and envelope preparation are greatly appreciated. Special thanks to regular newsletter contributors: Robert Wall, Karen & Arthur White, Andrew Nelson, Wendy & Phillip Grimm, Marion Anstis, George Madani and Punia Jeffery.

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FIELDTRIPS, OPEN DAYS AND WORKING BEES

From 8.30 AM Sunday 2 February and from 8.30 AM Saturday 1 March Contact Arthur White Green and Golden Bell Frog GGBF Working Bees Greenacre

FATS has been working hard to re-establish and maintain the GGBF *Litoria aurea* habitat at Greenacre. If you are able to lend a hand with maintenance of the site and ponds please join us for our next working bees. Please Contact Arthur White at arfawhite@gmail.com or 02 9599 1161 to register your attendance, if you are able to attend one or both of the working bees. Access to the site is opposite 1 Bellfrog Street, Greenacre . Please wear long pants and enclosed shoes. Drinking water, sunscreen, and a hat is recommended.

10 AM to 1 PM Sat 22 March 2025
Public Greenacre Open Day Contact Arthur White

There is a FATS Greenacre Open Day to coincide with World Frog Day in March 2025. Helpers will be needed to liaise with the public and act as guides. Contact Arthur White 02 9599 1161 if you are able to help on the day.

Saturday 8 February 2025 Dharawal National Park
Contact Robert Wall or Leader Michelle Toms for details

The FATS Dharawal field trip is open to **members only.** If you aren't a member its easy to sign up! Species commonly encountered include Blue Mountains Tree Frog *(Litoria citropa)*, Stony Creek Frog *(Litoria lesueuri)*, Green Stream Frog *(Litoria phyllochroa)*,and Peron's Tree Frog *(Litoria peronii), among others*. **Please contact Robert Wall** 02 9681 5308 or rjw2008@live.com.au if you are a member and you'd like to attend. If you aren't a member and would like to attend, please complete the membership form on the website www.fats.org.au Memberships available from $20 PA.

7 - 9 March Smiths Lake Camp-Out
Leaders: Karen and Arthur White

Please email Karen White white.kazzie@gmail.com by 16/2 and indicate that you (and others in your group) want to attend and what day you intend to arrive. Karen will then put your name on a list. If you attended the previous Smiths Lake field trip you will automatically go on the Reserve List.

Karen will send you a reply email to let you know which list you are on. If you are on the A list you must pay your accommodation by 22/2 to confirm your booking. If you do not pay by this date you will be removed from the A list. You can pay electronically to the FATS account: **Account Name: Frog and Tadpole Study Group BSB 082 342 Account No. 285 766 885. Cost is $25.00 per person, per night.** Karen will send you confirmation of your booking when your payment has been received.

Karen will email people on the Reserve list, a couple of weeks before the field trip dates. You will be told if there are spaces available for you or not. If are able to go, you will now need to forward your payment by 1/3 guarantee your place. Payment must be received by the 3/3. If not, your place will be given to the next person on the list. We think that this will be the fairest way to ensure that everyone gets a chance to go to Smith's Lake. Once Karen has confirmed your place on the Smiths Lake field trip weekend, booking payments are **non-refundable**.

Saturday 29 March 2025 Royal National Park
Lead by Arthur White.

Looking at frog sites on the upper Hacking River and at Bola Creek and Toonum Brook. **Register your interest in attending by contacting Robert Wall**.

In the event of uncertain frogging conditions e.g. prolonged/severe drought, hazardous and/or torrential rain, bushfires etc., please phone 02 9681 5308. Remember! rain is generally ideal for frogging! Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring enclosed shoes that can get wet (gumboots are preferable), torch, warm clothing and raincoat. Please be judicious with the use of insect repellent. Frogs are very sensitive to chemicals! Please observe all directions that the leader may give. Children are welcome, however please remember that young children especially can become very excited and boisterous at their first frogging experience. Parents are asked to help ensure that the leader is able to conduct the trip to everyone's satisfaction. All fieldtrips are strictly for members only. Newcomers are welcome to take out membership before the commencement of the fieldtrip. All participants accept that there is some inherent risk associated with outdoor fieldtrips and by attending agree to: a release of all claims, a waiver of liability, and an assumption of risk.