FROG CALL

THE FROG AND TADPOLE STUDY GROUP of NSW INC.

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NEWSLETTER No. 203 JUNE 2026

Lothar Voigt and the FATS' educational display, FrogMobile at Centennial Park 2008

In this issue

- FATS June 2026 public meeting
- Vale Lothar Voigt
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- Fight to save Littlejohn's Tree Frogs' habitat

Featured article

Communicating with frogs

By Garth Coupland

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Join us at our next meeting

Date: **Friday 5 June 2026**

Time: 7pm (arrive from 6.30pm)

Location: Education Centre,
Bicentennial Park,
Sydney Olympic Park,
Homebush Bay, NSW

How to get there...

By car: Turn left from Bennelong Pkwy onto Bicentennial Drive, then turn left onto Step Up Place and park in the P10f / Badu Mangroves carpark.

Public transport: It's a 10 minute walk from Concord West Railway Station. Walk down Victoria Ave then Bicentennial Park Pathway.

Note: *The path to the Education Centre isn't well lit, so please bring a torch.*

Everyone is welcome!

MEETING AGENDA

6:30pm Arrival, tea and coffee and raffle

7:00pm Welcome and announcements

7:30pm Speakers: **Dr Anthony Waddle** from Macquarie Uni. "Field testing vaccinations against chytrid fungus in the Green and Golden Bell Frog".

Fabian Byers is giving a rundown of the February 2026 FATS field trip to Smiths Lake.

9:00pm Show us your frog images. Tell us about your frogging trips or experiences. Drinks and supper provided. Relax and chat with frog friends and experts.

PRESIDENT'S PAD

Hello and welcome to the FATS June 2026 newsletter.

FATS is implementing a new and easier way to apply for and renew annual membership. Please keep an eye on your emails for a rundown of the new system which will be sent before 30 June. If you would like help with membership renewal, please don't hesitate to reach out.

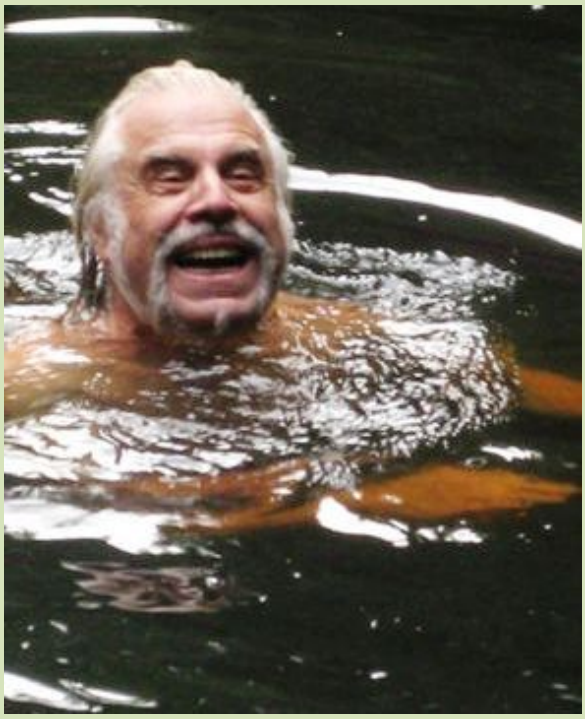
The FATS Annual General Meeting will be held at 7pm on 7 August 2026 at the Education Centre, Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park. There are a number of committee positions that are currently vacant. We would love to see these filled with keen froggers like yourselves. If you are interested to join the FATS committee, please reach out to me, I'm happy to answer any questions about what is involved or how you could contribute.

Our next public meeting will be held on **Friday 5 June starting at 7pm**. We hope to see you there!

Sincerely, Michelle FATS President

VALE

LOTHAR VOIGT



Lothar Voigt in his element, 2009

Lothar Voigt was a man in a million. He was a computer engineer and programmer by profession, but an ardent animal lover and animal advocate. I first met Lothar in 1985. He was a close friend of Harald Ehmann, another passionate animal lover. Both were members of the Australia Herpetological Society and went on many lizard and snake field trips together.

Lothar and Harald were the inspiration behind FATS. They, like myself, would attend the Herp meetings and hear some terrific presentations about snakes and lizards, whereas news about frogs was conspicuously absent. They both were in the field enough to know that something nasty was happening to Australian frogs and that there was no official response to this anywhere. This was the impetus to form a new society, whose main focus would be on the conservation and promotion of Australasian frogs. The acronym FATS seemed pretty catchy so we became the Frog and Tadpole Study Group of New South Wales Inc. in 1991. **continued on pages 4 and 5**

FATS MEMBERSHIP

Student $20
Single $30
Family $40

As a FATS member you receive FrogCall newsletters, access to free field trips and surveys and entry to the Frog-O-Graphic photo competition.

If you aren't a member but would like to join, it's easy to sign up!

Account Name
Frog & Tadpole Study Group

BSB 082 001

Account No. 313 033 719

Membership renewal is due on 30 June 2026.

FATS is implementing a new membership process which will allow electronic payments. Details of the process will be emailed prior to 30 June, and will be included in the next FrogCall.

Payment via bank transfer (account details above), cheque, or cash (at meeting) is also accepted.

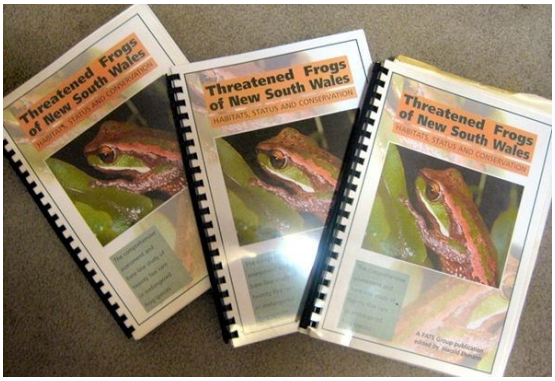
Thank you for your ongoing support!

I should point out, that in 1991, frogs were not protected animals in Australia. In fact, they weren't even listed as animals. Government acts at the time only dealt with mammals, birds and exotic (feral) species. Frogs didn't get a mention. This had to change.

FATS was formed and the first president was Harald Ehmann. Other founding members included Lothar Voigt, Martyn Robinson, Steve Kum-jew, Karen Thumm, David Miller, Danny Wotherspoon, Shane Gow and Arthur White. We were a small group but one that was determined to have an impact.

Our first meetings were held in the Sydney Technical College (now UTS) in Ultimo (which is where Harald worked as a lecturer). Our early meetings were all about apparent frog declines in New South Wales (and perhaps elsewhere, we were not sure about the other states). It was no good just having the field herpers saying that frogs were disappearing from their study sites, it would require a systematic survey of the species believed to have declined and then a formal presentation of the results to governmental agencies. This would take a lot of time and money. Harald and Lothar set about to find a sponsor for this project but as frogs were off the agenda everywhere we had little positive response. It was Lothar who managed to gather the seeding money for our surveys by seeking several small donations from some of the companies that he did business with. Later, Harald was able to secure a small grant to cover some of our running costs.

This was the beginnings of ENDFROGS.- the first state-wide survey of endangered frogs in Australia. A list of 20 suspected species was prepared and then Lothar and Harald began contacting other frog fanciers that they knew around the state asking them to visit particular frog locations and to conduct surveys along specific guidelines and to relay the results back to us. Of course, we only knew people who could cover about 28 of the 112 sites that we wished to survey. The rest would have to be done by the ENDFROG committee, with Harald and Lothar doing the bulk of the surveys. It took almost 2 years to complete the surveys- all of us who were involved in the surveys found the time table fairly grueling and the distances that needed to be covered fairly arduous. But it was done.



ENDFROGS Book 1997

Of the 20 nominated species, 16 proved to be in decline, some were almost extinct. The next 18 months entailed collating all of the results and preparing a readable booklet of the results that could be distributed to government agencies. The work was spread amongst the more literate in our group, Harald was the editor. The "Threatened Frogs of New South Wales: habitats, status, conservation" was finally published in 1997.

While all of this activity associated with the ENDFROGS study was underway, FATS was conducting meetings and slowly gathering new members. Harald remained as president until 1995 when Lothar (who had been the Vice-President the whole time) stepped up to become President. Lothar was president for one year and in 1996 gladly passed the baton to Martyn Robinson.

Lothar did not want to be the front man for FATS, he wanted to be the action man. Harald could do all of the soliciting of politicians and government agency heads, Lothar would start the active promotion of frogs in Sydney and elsewhere in NSW. Promotion would entail frog displays at various locations in Sydney, Newcastle and the Illawarra (to begin with) and Lothar was man to do this. He began organizing venues and a timetable for frog displays, and soliciting volunteers to help man the displays. Between 1996 and 2007, Lothar must have co-ordinated hundreds of displays and he attended nearly all of them himself.

The other method of promotion is by our newsletter (FrogCall). In the early years, FrogCall was a merely a few pages of typed frog news with a couple of photos pasted to them. It was very basic but vital to keep contact with all of our members. In 1998, FrogCall changed to a much more presentable and readable journal-style newsletter. This came about because Monica Wangmann stepped up and decided to act as Editor of FrogCall. The improvement in FrogCall was one of the reasons that FATS membership continued to grow. Lothar had a regular column in FrogCall that was devoted to frog conservation- he also invented Claude the frog, who became the protagonist in many of Lothar's stories about frogs.

Lothar was also very active as a presenter at FATS' meetings. When FATS met at the Australian Museum, Lothar would gobsmack the audience with his demonstrations of simple and cheap ways to house frogs, most entailed the use of discarded broccoli boxes from the markets. Imagine if you can, a German engineer standing before 150 people in the Australian Museum auditorium, explaining how you construct a three-tiered frog enclosure out of polystyrene such that the whole system could be cleaned in two minutes by an ingenious system of flow through sluices and channels. Lothar had a passion for design and this was to come to the fore with the FrogMobile.

Lothar was still not satisfied that the travelling displays had enough drawing-power. Something was needed that would make passers-by curious and want to come over and look and talk. Whatever, this something was, it would have to be fully mobile and able to be set up and taken down in a relatively short time frame.

Lothar at work on the FrogMobile 2004

I attended numerous meetings where Lothar would present various options for a mobile frog display- each time it would become even grander (but more complicated). Finally, he presented the FrogMobile. In essence, it consisted of a series of frog display cases mounted in a trailer. The display cases would have their own water supplies and there would be water holding tanks and waste water tanks underneath the display cases. Pipe and valves were required to control the water flow.

But simply showing people frogs in glass display cases was not enough. The FrogMobile had to be different, and it also needed places to hang posters and information panels. So, Lothar incorporated bat-wing panels that folded out and upwards on either side of the trailer. This made the FrogMobile appear more like a marquee. All of this was adding a lot of weight to the trailer, so a heavy-duty trailer was required and the panels would all have to made of aluminium. To defray the costs, Lothar managed to secure a grant of $80,000 from Osram.

The inner shell of the FrogMobile 2004

The FrogMobile was an instant success. It drew crowds wherever it went. The problem with it was, that it was heavy and required only 2 people to set it all up. For many years we had monthly displays at Centennial Park in Sydney and often, the same people would return to see the FrogMobile again. Lothar took the FrogMobile on the road and quickly discovered that when the water tanks were full, the momentum of the FrogMobile made it very hard for a conventional car to pull it or steer. Lothar burned out a few clutches over the years but that did not quell his enthusiasm.

At every venue, Lothar would be out front spruiking to the crowd. One of his favourite little crowd-pulling tricks was to set up a child's wading pool with water in front of the FrogMobile. Then he would put on his swimming togs, don a snorkle and face plate, add a few tadpoles to the water and then splash around happily in the pond until he was surrounded by curious people wondering what the hell he was up to. Lothar, of course, wanted to tell them about tadpoles. His enthusiasm was contagious and his humour was very engaging.

FrogMobile at Sydney Olympic Park 2008

Lothar regaling the crowds with frog humour and frog facts

Sadly, the massive effort to maintain the high demand for the FrogMobile began to tell. Lothar was getting older and his health was failing. Eventually, we had to give up the FrogMobile when Lothar could no longer do it. This still remains as one of the inspiring efforts to laud frogs that I know of.

In his latter years, Lothar had to cease presenting at FATS meetings and eventually was no longer able to attend. He never rescinded his membership of FATS.

Lothar was champion of frogs. His loss is a big one. His legacy is huge. During his time, frogs became listed on the state and federal register as animals of concern. Universities finally turned their attentions to frogs and all of sudden a massive amount of new information about Australian frogs became known. The number of people studying frogs rose from just one to two, to hundreds.

Thank you, Lothar Voigt. We miss you.

Arthur White

Mixophyes fasciolatus **breeding behaviours D'Aguilar Range SE Qld Watercolour by Garth Coupland**

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES
COMMUNICATING WITH FROGS

Watercolour photos and story
by Garth Coupland

Mixo*phyes fasciolatus* male calling.
Mt Glorious, SE Qld

I am winding my way downwards on a small, rainforest track towards Green's Falls on Mount Glorious in the D'Aguilar Range of Southeast Queensland. All is profoundly silent, damp and still. As the track now runs above a small, trickling stream, I make a loud, guttural, bark that echoes through the forest and almost startles its maker with its loudness. Immediately my call is answered with the same bark that I was impersonating. Several, male, Great Barred Frogs now call, I presume to put this new kid in town in his place. I call back which sets them off again. This gives me a chance to discover where they might be found and observed.

Mixophyes fasciolatus **A male calling on Mt Nebo, SE Qld.**

The Great Barred Frog – *Mixophyes fasciolatus* is a large, ground-dwelling frog of the central East coast and ranges of NE New South Wales and SE Queensland. It is one of seven species in the genus occurring in Australia. All are some of the continent's largest frogs.

It lays eggs which the female kicks up the banks of forest streams after they have been fertilised in the water. The eggs stick readily to the substrate and the tadpoles enter the water after hatching; a most unusual oviposition! I postulate that this behaviour

may be driven by the fact that these streams have egg predators such as fish, predatory water-beetles and crayfish. It is a fairly common frog throughout its range, in the right habitats, and the juveniles are particularly beautifully marked and coloured.

All Mixophyes species are extremely well camouflaged amongst the leaf-litter of the forest floor. However, it is the unusual habit of calling from a chosen stage that particularly interests me, particularly as I can't keep off a stage myself! Having been a Rock singer since 1977 I felt a strange kinship with these guys.

These 'stages' are always close to the stream on a bank, a buttress tree root or a hollow in which the frog sits, facing outward, throwing his voice into the night. He is using the physics of sound waves in the same way used by the Sydney Opera House. I have found them calling, facing outwards on man-made steps on a descending path.

***Mixophyes fasciolatus* male, post calling Cunningham's Gap, SE Qld. above and below**

Mixophyes are shy frogs. Approached at night, after they emerge from burrows or under leaves, they have a habit of ducking down and half closing their eyes. This makes for a most unsatisfactory photo of the individual. However, after rain, when in full, calling mode, the males appear more confident, excitable and belligerent and one may approach them closely and photograph them.

My entry for 18th February 2014 records my interactions with these frogs, on their stages, by a rainforest stream near Cunningham's Gap in the Great Dividing Range, West of Brisbane.

***Mixophyes fasciolatus* males calling Mt Nebo SE Qld. Above and below**

They were very excitable as it was raining and many males were calling along the stream. I called right in front of them. One turned round as if the sound came from the back of his stage and all changed their call to a quieter grunt. I noted that I felt that they were challenging the sound rather than frightened by it. I felt bad about this experiment and I remember apologising to them for upsetting them with my trickery.

Garth Coupland

Ourimbah Creek Valley supports the highest diversity of frog species on the NSW Central Coast, including Southern Barred Frog, *Mixophyes australis*, Green-thighed Frog *Sylvagemma brevipalmata*, Giant Burrowing Frog *Heleioporus australiacus*, Red-crowned Toadlet *Pseudophrne Australia*, Heath Frog *Rawlinsonia littlejohni* and Sandpaper Frogs *Lechriodus*. **FATS alerted to this article by Grant Webster.**

ABSOLUTELY HORRIFIED: COMMUNITY LEFT IN THE DARK ABOUT PFAS CONTAMINATION

By Fleur Connick 7 February 2026 – extracts

The discovery of a dead platypus with high levels of PFAS led water scientist Dr Ian Wright to this contaminated wetland on the NSW Central Coast. *ABC News: Fleur Connick*

Scientists have sounded the alarm on "hazardous concentrations" of PFAS in this waterway, near where a petrol tanker crashed 25 years ago. Among the remnants of an ancient rainforest, sits a small wetland rippling with insect life — drawing birds and other animals for food and water. About 250 metres away is the Ourimbah rest area, a car park off the M1 Motorway on the New South Wales Central Coast.If you listen closely, beyond the calls of whipbirds and Eastern Yellow Robins, you can hear the rumble of trucks passing.

The wetland drains into Ourimbah Creek, which was an important part of the Central Coast's drinking supply until 18 months ago. Scientists have also identified this wetland as a hotspot for "forever chemicals". But it's not the only waterway in the Ourimbah Creek catchment where testing has found the toxic chemicals. An ABC investigation can reveal elevated levels of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been consistently detected at another location in the Ourimbah catchment for more than a year. Water testing, conducted in the upper reaches of the catchment found readings above the national drinking water guidelines dating back to November 2024. One water sample exceeded the limit by almost 60 times. Some measurements have even been higher than the more relaxed requirements for recreational water. PFAS encompass a group of thousands of man-made chemicals, and are known as "forever chemicals" because they don't break down naturally. Among those sounding the alarm is water scientist Dr Ian Wright, whose independent PFAS testing in the Blue Mountains and Belubula River sparked a NSW parliamentary inquiry. He says the wetland is the epicentre of a major PFAS contamination in the Ourimbah catchment. "The numbers were huge and supported the theory that, if this were a heat map of the waterways, this is the hottest zone," Dr Wright, who is an Associate Professor of Environmental Science at Western Sydney University, says. "It's hard to believe something this beautiful is also seriously contaminated." His results, combined with documents obtained by the ABC under freedom of information laws, suggest it might have been contaminated for more than 25 years, unbeknownst to locals, scientists or authorities. And according to new scientific sleuthing, the cause was likely a dramatic and deadly truck crash that was all but forgotten over the intervening decades. But it turns out this wetland isn't the catchment's only PFAS hotspot. And the truck crash isn't the only likely culprit.

A leaking landfill About 15 to 20 kilometres away from the wetland, at the top of the Ourimbah catchment, sits a large dormant landfill, known to locals as the "Mangrove Mountain Dump", which has long sparked community concern about its impact on the region's water supply. Community concern about the landfill's environmental impact grew as a huge dirt mound, large crater and leachate ponds emerged over the years. Monthly PFAS monitoring of the Ourimbah Catchment, conducted by the Central Coast Council, shows ongoing PFAS detections in waterways near the Mangrove Mountain Landfill at levels above both the national drinking water and ecological water quality guidelines — dating back to November 2024. The highest results were recorded in July 2025, with a type of PFAS known as PFHxS detected more than 58 times the drinking water guidelines in a water sample collected from a creek beside the dump. The drinking water guidelines apply to water that's delivered for drinking — not untreated water that exists anywhere in the catchment. But the high levels have caused alarm. In November, a federal parliamentary inquiry into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS in Australia handed down its final report, which referenced recent findings by international studies that at least two PFAS chemicals — PFOA and PFOS — are "carcinogens". The studies also established that PFAS are associated with multiple health effects, including heart disease, neurological effects and developmental effects health effects, including heart disease, neurological effects and developmental effects.

It follows an Upper House inquiry into PFAS in NSW waterways and drinking water supplies, which found the Australian drinking water guidelines continue to permit higher levels of key PFAS chemicals — PFOS, PFHxS and PFOA — than comparable international standards, even after being updated in June 2025 to impose lower limits. Because "forever chemicals" don't break down, they can also build up in organisms and accumulate into higher concentrations as they move through food chains. This is known as bioaccumulation. Since January, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has also been monitoring for PFAS and other indicators of contamination from the landfill, in a creek "immediately downstream" of the Mangrove Mountain Landfill. Its testing results similarly show monthly PFAS detections (PFOS and PFHxS) above the drinking water guidelines, although not as high as the levels detected by council. A spokesperson for the NSW EPA said in a statement its sampling detected "low levels of PFAS, which may be indicative of contamination coming from the Mangrove Mountain site". The EPA says it issued two prevention notices to the facility's operator, Verde Terra Pty Ltd, requiring it to improve its management of potential contamination sources and to install additional monitoring. It would also be subject to unannounced inspections.

Mapping the PFAS plume About 5 kilometres downstream from Mrs O'Sullivan's place is the wetland Dr Wright describes as the epicentre of the separate PFAS plume, which sits at the bottom of the Ourimbah catchment. Dr Wright and his PhD student, Katherine Warwick, were behind an Australian-first study that found alarmingly high levels of PFOS in the livers of eight dead platypuses, collected from waterways across NSW.

Their working theory is a crash just off the M1 Motorway at Ourimbah, involving a 40,000-litre petrol tanker colliding with a car on December 8, 2000. The crash killed two people and caused a significant explosion. Using Freedom of Information laws, the ABC obtained an incident report of the 2000 Ourimbah truck crash from Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW). The report revealed that approximately 1,000 litres of firefighting foam known to contain PFAS, called Alcohol-Type Concentrate (ATC), was used to extinguish the fireball. PFAS foam was used to extinguish a tanker crash just off the M1 Motorway at Ourimbah, on December 8, 2000. *(News Archives)* Dr Wright suspects a substantial quantity of PFAS-containing firefighting foam drained into the wetlands and Ourimbah Creek flood plain below. ATC and Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF) were previously used by Fire and Rescue NSW and were withdrawn from service in 2007. The study, which is undergoing peer-review for publication in a scientific journal, found "hazardous concentrations" of PFAS in both catchments and concluded the pollution was likely caused by two similar, but separate, fuel tanker traffic accidents where PFAS-containing firefighting foam was used. His testing similarly detected PFOS and PFHxS at elevated levels in all sediment and water samples taken from the Ourimbah wetlands, which are less than 500 metres from a groundwater bore field and about 1 kilometre upstream of the weir. One water sample exceeded the ecological guidelines for PFOS by more than 1,000 times and another more than 800 times.

Ourimbah wetland, ***ABC News: Fleur Connick***

"The sediment content of the contaminated wetlands is several hundred times more concentrated than the water in the wetlands," he says. Professor O'Carroll says Dr Wright's study showed PFAS contamination doesn't go away. "This again highlights society's need to reduce unnecessary chemical use, as there could be unknown long-term consequences." He added that it was important to consider the risks and have a pragmatic approach, noting the significant cost of cleaning up PFAS from the environment.

What's in the fish? Another independent scientist, who asked to remain anonymous because of commercial relationships, also provided the ABC with analysis backing up Dr Wright's results. They collected samples in February from Ourimbah Creek and wetlands near the Ourimbah Creek Rest Area, and tested them for PFAS in a laboratory accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities. The scientist conducted the testing after an Australian bass caught from Ourimbah Creek in 2023 showed elevated levels of PFOS. "The research that I've seen, not just in platypus, but in some other species, is really frightening. If that isn't enough to get the government to act on looking at PFAS in waterways, not just drinking water, then I don't know what is." **https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-02-07/pfas-contamination-investigation-ourimbah-creek-catchment-nsw/106037472**

UPCOMING EXPOS AND EVENTS

- **Friday 5 June:** Endangered Species Day
- **Wednesday 3 June** Frogs Vic meeting
- **Friday 7PM 7 August 2026** FATS AGM
- **31 August Frog-O-Graphic comp. closes**
- **August** Science week
- **August** Potential Penrith Reptile Expo
- **September** Potential Illawarra Reptile Expo
- **September** Recommencing FATS field trips

FATS needs helpers at the Greenacre, Green and Golden Bell Frog conservation site. If you'd like to get outdoors and lend a hand, reach out to Arthur White at arfawhite@gmail.com
You may even see a frog or two!

FATS AGM, FIELD TRIPS, OPEN DAYS, COMPETITIONS AND EVENTS

Some FATS presentations are being recorded. Visit our FATS Facebook group where Peter Vickery has uploaded talks from Euan Auld and Rhys Cairncross. https://www.facebook.com/groups/FATSNSW/ Our FATS website also has educational videos. https://www.fats.org.au/videos-and-sounds

FATS AGM NOTICE FRIDAY 7/8/2026

The AGM will commence at 7pm on Friday 7 August 2026. FATS meets at the Education Centre, Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush Bay, NSW. Please check the FATS website and August 2026 FrogCall 204.

If you would like to ask any questions about joining the FATS committee, please call us. Contact our President, Michelle Toms at least two weeks before the meeting for further information and to submit items.

We appreciate fresh ideas and need new members on our committee. No experience required. The committee meets 6 times a year. Those far away can attend via video or audio link. No task commitments or time expected of committee members, other than what you can spare.

See contacts details on page 12. **Michelle Toms**

FATS 2026 FROG-O-GRAPHIC COMPETITION

The Frog-O-Graphic competition closes on the 31/8/2026. Send email submissions to photos@fats.org.au

Categories: Best Frog Image, Best Pet Frog Image, Most Interesting Image and People's Choice. **Include your name, that you are a financial member of FATS, identify the frog species preferably by scientific name (in the file name), location, if known, if it is a pet frog and your phone number. Max 6 entries per person. Max attachment size 6 MB**

SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK BIG FROG NEWS

Last week we welcomed almost 1,000 young Green and Golden Bell Frogs to the Park. These little legends are part of a ground-breaking field trial led by Dr Anthony Waddle and a team of researchers from Macquarie University, who've developed a world-first chytrid immunisation protocol to help protect frogs from this deadly fungus. Half of the frogs released were inoculated, while the other half will be studied as a control group. Over the next year we'll be keeping a close eye on how both groups of frogs thrive across the Brickpit, Kronos Hill, and Wentworth Common. In partnership with Saving Our Species (DCCEEW), we're taking conservation science out of the lab and into the wild, giving this iconic species its best shot at long-term survival. With more than 30 years of frog conservation at Sydney Olympic Park, this milestone brings together deep local expertise and cutting-edge research, and we're excited to see what it means for the future of the Green and Golden Bell Frog. Here's to science, teamwork, collaboration and a whole lot of happy hops ahead.

OSCAR WINNER JOINS FIGHT TO SAVE ENDANGERED FROG

Photo Aaron Payne ***Rawlinsonia littlejohni***

Hollywood superstar Leonardo DiCaprio has joined the growing voices calling for the habitat of an endangered frog species to be saved from the planned Hunter Transmission Project. The Oscar winner shared a post from Hunter-based conservation group Aussie Ark on his Instagram highlighting the danger facing the Littlejohn's Tree Frog *Rawlinsonia littlejohni* and one of the species key breeding grounds.

The project's corridor route is on track to pave directly through the Watagan State Forest, which is also a vital breeding environment for the species.

Aussie Ark and a number of other organisations have called for the habitat to be spared, with the species facing the possibility of extinction if the transmission line goes ahead as planned. The project is currently under assessment by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, and is designed to connect the Bayswater and Eraring Power Stations.

https://2hd.com.au/articles/oscar-winner-against-hunter-transmission-line/ 26/3/2026 Forwarded to FATS by Paul Laurance and Peter Vickery

DON'T FORGET TO DISINFECT!

Help prevent the spread of pathogens by sanitizing your footwear and equipment before and after exploring wetland areas. Adhere to the straightforward procedure: Scrub, Disinfect, Rinse.

Step 1: Begin by rinsing all tools with water and utilize a scrubbing brush to eliminate debris such as dirt and mud. Focus particularly on the soles of your footwear.

Step 2: Apply a 1.6% bleach solution or a similar disinfectant on all gear (refer to the handout below). Allow it to sit for a minimum of 5 minutes. **Do not apply bleach within 150 feet of water bodies; it's advisable to bring a rinsing bucket to catch any bleach spray and to rinse your gear in the field.**

Step 3: Rinse all equipment thoroughly with water to wash away the disinfectant.

👉 Access the Printable NE PARC protocol here: http://northeastparc.org/docs/NEPARC-Field-Equipment-Disinfection-Protocol.pdf

👉 Discover additional Herp Disease Resources at: https://parcplace.org/species/herpetofaunal-disease-resources/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax6dx72xOCQ&t=12s

https://youtu.be/ax6dx72xOCQ

RECORD SENTENCE FOR REPTILE SMUGGLER

A 61-year-old Sydney man has received a record jail sentence for attempting to export Australian reptiles to Hong Kong, Romania, South Korea and Sri Lanka. Neil Simpson was sentenced to 8 years in jail with a non-parole period of 5 years and 4 months. The sentence relates to three combined charges of attempting to export Australian Regulated Native Specimens, in 15 separate packages, between 2018 and 2023.

DCCEEW investigators recovered 101 live reptiles from seized parcels. Several hundred live reptiles were seized during subsequent search warrants, as part of Operations Buckland and Pandora. Lizards, skinks and dragons were secured in calico bags. These bags were concealed in bags of popcorn, biscuit tins and a women's handbag and placed inside cardboard boxes. Specimens recovered comprised Shingleback lizards, Western blue-tongue lizards, Centralian blue-tongue lizards, Bearded dragons, Southern Pygmy spiny-tailed skinks, Eastern Pilbara spiny-tailed skinks, Desert skinks, Narrow-banded sand swimmers and Major Skinks.

https://www.dcceew.gov.au/about/news/record-sentence-reptile-smuggler **17/2/2026 extracts**

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT WE DO

The Frog and Tadpole Study Group of New South Wales inc is a non-for-profit society run by unpaid volunteers, dedicated to community awareness, advocacy and the conservation of frogs. We are actively involved in monitoring frog populations, conducting field trips, exhibiting at community events, fairs and shows, and providing talks at local community groups. We have regular public meetings and offer student research grants, produce FrogCall newsletters and FrogFacts information sheets.

MEMBERSHIPS: Encourage your friends to become a member or donate. Donations help with the costs of frog rescue and care, the FrogWatch Helpline, student research grants and advocacy. Memberships are $20 for students, $30 single and $40 family, annually. Please be patient, it may take some time for us to confirm memberships. Visit our website if you'd like to get involved. https://www.fats.org.au/membership-form

EVENTS: If you'd like to have a speaker attend an event, exhibition, or community group (eg garden club, Probus group) please contact Kathy Potter our Exhibitions coordinator. If you are a member and would like to assist with talks and events please also reach out to Kathy.

MEETINGS: Our public meetings are held on the first Friday of every even month (February, April, June, August, October and December). If the meeting falls on a public holiday (eg Good Friday), the date will move. Please check our website and your emails for notices. The meetings are informative, informal, topical, practical and free for everyone to attend. Visitors are welcome.

How to get there... **By car:** Turn left from Bennelong Parkway onto Bicentennial Drive, then turn left onto Step Up Place and park in the free (in the evenings) P10f / Badu Mangroves carpark.

By public transport: It's a 10 minute walk from Concord West Railway Station. Walk down Victoria Ave then Bicentennial Park Pathway. The path to the Education Centre isn't well lit so please bring a torch.

FACEBOOK: Our Facebook page has about 6,800 members and visitors worldwide. Posts vary from frog identification, husbandry, and health enquiries, posts about pets, gardens, wild frogs, frog ponds, research, new discoveries, jokes, cartoons, events, and habitats from all over the world. The page includes dozens of information files. Keep scrolling to see them all.
You are welcome to join us at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/FATSNSW/

FROGWATCH, VOLUNTEER RUN, HELPLINE: We operate a frog rescue helpline for lost and injured frogs in the greater Sydney area. Please contact the volunteer Frogwatch Helpline on **0419 249 728**. It may take some time for us to respond or arrange collection of rescued frogs, so please be patient.

Thank you to the FATS committee, general members, FrogCall supporters, talented meeting speakers, Frog-O-Graphic competition entrants, event participants and organisers. Special thanks to those who contributed FrogCall articles, photos and media. New content for our newsletter is always welcome.

FATS COMMITTEE

Position	Name	Contact
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