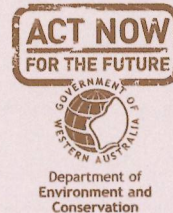


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# Shark Bay World Heritage Notes



ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICE, DENHAM, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## SANDHILL FROG

One of the strangest creatures in Shark Bay is the Sandhill Frog (*Arenophryne rotunda*) which spends most of its days buried in the sand on the dunes of Edel Land.

The peculiar looking frog is about 3cm long, short limbed, globular, with loose skin on the hind legs. Its colour varies from a uniform off white or dull cream to grey or brown, marked with small areas or spots of green, dark brown or brick red. Individual can rapidly change from a pale to dark colour.

In February 1978, the sandhill frog became the first amphibian to be listed as 'fauna which is rare or in need of special protection' under the Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act. However, the rare status is being reviewed as more is learnt about its biology and distribution.

The sandhill frog is known to be quite common in Edel Land and it is thought that its range extends south to the Kalbarri National Park and inland through the Zuytdorp Nature Reserve. There is anecdotal evidence that it occurs on Peron Peninsula, however, this is not confirmed.

Living in sandhills, this is one of the few frogs that throughout its life never sees free water in terms of pools or puddles. Its burrowing nature allows it to live in the moist subsurface sand from which it is capable of absorbing water despite a very low water content. It does not have tadpoles. The young frogs hatch directly from large eggs laid buried in the sand.

The bizarre burrowing habit of the sandhill frog, using the hands for digging and going in head first, is only known in one other Australian frog species. At one point during the burial the legs are raised off the ground, giving a true diving impression. After the frog has submerged, all that remains on the soil surface is a small mound.

The sandhill frog emerges when it rains or in the night dew to feed on ants and other insects. Up to 30 metres will be travelled in search of food.

As a result of the nocturnal habit and the burrowing nature, it is unlikely that you will encounter a sandhill frog. More than likely the only evidence you will come across that sandhill frogs are around, are the distinct tracks which are marked at the beginning and end with the burrowing mound.

