

URBAN ANTICS!

FROGS

Winter again. Water, wet grass, pools, ponds, puddles ... and frogs.

It's time to be entertained again by those neckless, fat-bellied, goggle-eyed, big-mouthed sons of tadpoles that seem to win their way into our hearts, homes and swimming pools at least once a year.

For ages, the frog has been one of the animals most likely to share in the lives of children. Nursery rhymes, pop songs, squeaky toys in the bath, tadpoles in jars, chocolate Fredos and, most important of all, the King: Kermit with his daily children's TV workshop.

Frogs are amphibians. Most spend part of their lives as water animals and part as land animals. Some live their entire lives in or near water while others never come near water, even to mate.

Only two families of frogs are found in and around Perth's Swan Coastal Plain - tree frogs and ground dwellers (or burrowers). More than 20 species, however, of all shapes, sizes, colours and calling sounds, make up these families.

Most frogs have a thin, moist skin and are also cold-blooded, so they tend to live in cooler places such as leaf-litter, in dense vegetation, wetland areas or underground. It is after summer or autumn rains that humans and frogs most often come into contact. The frogs emerge from their hiding spots to relish the cool cleansing rain,



catch a juicy bug and perhaps find a mate. Driving around any of our suburban wetland parks on a rainy night can be quite soul-destroying, as thousands of beasts cover roadways and are accidentally run over.

Throughout suburban Perth there have been a few interesting frog reports of late. One householder was amazed to find his privacy invaded by a couple of slippery characters on his window ledge. Further observation revealed that his visitors were successfully climbing the glass pane to catch insects attracted by the electric light. Even more interesting was the discovery a day or so later of frogs hiding under the leaf-litter in the roof-gutter above the window.

At different times of the year, depending on the species, females respond to the loud calls of males and move towards the source of the noise. Mating occurs and eggs are laid. Recently, moaning frogs have made themselves very unpopular in Booragoon backyards. These stout, burrowing species have been calling

before the autumn rain and their loud, low moans have infuriated would-be sleepers. If this happens to you, saturate the area thoroughly with a hose and the culprits will move away.

The rarely seen, bizarre-looking turtle frog has also made an appearance in the metropolitan area, with one being found in Kings park. Another was caught by a dog, which suffered for his trouble with a frothing mouth caused by skin toxins.

All frogs secrete a varying toxicity of poison through glands around their body. Equally, though, human handling of delicate-skinned frogs has a damaging effect on the poor old frog. So be careful!

For more stories on frogs, visit your local library. Better still, rush to your local wetland and, in the solitude of thick vegetation, experience an orchestra of sound from frog calls like you've never dreamed possible.

JOHN HUNTER

DID YOU KNOW?

- Frogs appeared on Earth about 180 million years ago. About 2 700 species of frogs and toads exist today.
- Toads are different from frogs. They have a broader, flatter body and darker, drier, warty skin. No toads occur naturally in Australia.
- A frog's eyes bulge out, enabling nearly all-round vision. To aid the swallowing of prey, the eyes sink through openings in the skull and force food down the throat.

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME SIX NO. 4 - WINTER EDITION 1991



Cloud-capped Bluff Knoll, majestically brooding sentinel of the Stirling Range. Does it hold a secret in its stony heart - perhaps the answer to the missing mammal mystery? See story on page 9.



A western swamp tortoise (*Pseudemys umbrina*). Could this be one of the last to be photographed? Not if CALM's ten-year recovery plan succeeds. See page 28 for details.



Mulga and fire - at best an uneasy relationship - sometimes symbiotic, sometimes disastrous. Find out when and where on page 20.



The Kimberley's rugged grandeur is deceptively fragile. Additional reserves managed by CALM help protect the region's delicate, complex and diverse ecosystems. See page 35.



An uncommon dragon, *Caimaniops amphibolurioides* inhabits mulga shrubs. Many other dragon lizards prefer harsher habitats such as rock-piles and salt lake/beds. See page 51.

FEATURES

MOUNTAINS OF MYSTERY GORDON FRIEND & GRAHAM HALL	9
1080: THE TOXIC PARADOX JACK KINNEAR & DENNIS KING	14
MULGA & FIRE TONY START AND OTHERS	20
WHEN JARRAH WAS KING OTTO PRAUSE	24
WHAT THE TORTOISE TAUGHT US ANDREW BURBIDGE	28
COMPETING FOR PARADISE KEVIN KENNEALLY & NORM MCKENZIE	35
WICKED DECEPTIONS SUZANNE CURRY	39
POISON PEAS: DEADLY PROTECTORS STEVE HOPPER	44
DRAGONS OF THE DESERT DAVID PEARSON	51
R E G U L A R S	
IN PERSPECTIVE	4
BUSH TELEGRAPH	5
ENDANGERED DIEBACK-PRONE PLANTS	43
URBAN ANTICS	54

COVER

Central netted dragon (*Ctenophorus inermis*), one of the more than 60 species of dragon lizard that inhabit the arid and semi-arid parts of Australia. The acute eyesight and swiftness of dragon lizards are essential in order to avoid predators and to capture food. See page 51.

Illustrated by Philippa Nikulinsky



Managing Editor: Ron Kawaiak
 Editor: Ray Bailey
 Contributing Editors: Verna Costello, David Gough, Tanya Maxted, Carolyn Thomson
 Designers: Sue Marais, Stacey Strickland
 Finished art: Sandra Mitchell
 Advertising: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (09) 389 8644 Fax: 389 8296
 Illustration: Sandra Mitchell
 Colour Separation by Prepress Services
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print

© ISSN 0815-4465. All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers



Published by Dr S Shea, Executive Director
 Department of Conservation and Land Management,
 50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia 6152.