

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW...



A new species of frog has been found in a peaty swamp in a remote part of the south-west of WA. The discovery was made by Edith Cowan University lecturer, Pierre Horwitz, in January.

"The frog is distinctively coloured, with a mottled blue and white belly. Its legs, hands, chest and throat are a striking orange colour and its back is covered with knobby brown skin. It is about 35 millimetres long," Department of Conservation and Land Management researcher Grant Wardell-Johnson said.

"The frog is like no other in Australia and is clearly a new genus. The species therefore has immense scientific interest," Dale Roberts, a frog researcher at The University of Western Australia, said.

"It appears to be related to several genera and is therefore very old - perhaps more than

30 million years!"

The species is currently known from only two sites within the proposed Mount Roe National Park, recommended in CALM's new Forest Management Plan.

"CALM will ensure its habitat is given special management protection," Grant said.

"It will be important to protect the vegetation surrounding the swamps from dieback (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*), to ensure water tables stay at current levels, and to keep the peat that forms the frogs' habitat fire-free."

Grant, Pierre and Dale are currently describing the animal. Subsequent research will investigate where it fits into the picture of frog evolution in Australia.

Studies on the distribution and conservation status of the species will also be carried out.

Scientists can then recommend whether it should be added to the schedule of threatened fauna.

This discovery shows that we still have much to learn about the State's wildlife. It is surprising that, despite more than 40 years of intensive study, a new frog species has been found in a region in which most people thought the vertebrate fauna was well known.

Who knows what other vulnerable or restricted species may await discovery in the fascinating peat swamps of the South West?

This striking new frog species is so new that it doesn't yet have a scientific name, but it has already attracted a great deal of scientific interest. Scientists from CALM, Edith Cowan University and the University of WA will scour surrounding swamps to find out its exact distribution.

Photos - Grant Wardell-Johnson

LANDSCOPE

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Hand in hand with nature. This brushtail possum is just one of the animals studied during fauna surveys of the Batalling Forest. See page 16.



Lush vegetation and a welcoming smile greet you as you arrive at Mt Hart Homestead, the 'Oasis in the Leopolds'. See page 48.



'Fire, Wind and Water', on page 42, tells of recent research into the rehabilitation of exploration tracks in the Rudall River area of the Little Sandy Desert.



Deep beneath the Southern Ocean lies the wreck of the Sanko Harvest. This rotting hull is now an artificial reef attracting marine life and divers alike. See page 23.



Plantations of brown mallet in the early 1900's began a chain of events that resulted in the 'Woodland Wonderland' of Dryandra. See page 28.

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COVER

Woylies prefer clumped, relatively open vegetation with sandy soils that are easy to dig. They are found, among other places, at Batalling Forest and the Dryandra Woodland. See stories on pages 16 and 28.

The illustration is by Philippa Nikulinsky.



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