

## *Should tadpoles be moved when the pond dries up?*

*Alison Doley*

The April 2004 issue of 'Western Wildlife' had an interesting article on the Western Spotted Frog [by Robert Davis – *Ed.*] which occurs in this area. (In September 1990, Stephen Davies collected one in a pit trap on our farm.)

The article mentions the problem of 'early pond drying'. Occasionally I come across tadpoles struggling to survive in the last muddy dregs of a pool. I rescue as many as possible and transfer them to the nearest dam with water, which can be up to 4 km away. The temperature of the dam is lower than that in the drying pool, is this a problem? Is there a risk of transferring disease? Are the tadpoles being transferred to an unsuitable habitat? I cannot identify which species are involved.

Perhaps Robert Davis could provide some advice on the best way to re-locate tadpoles, or is it a futile exercise carried out by someone who has not completely lost that childhood fascination with tadpoles!

### *Comment*

I was unable to contact Dr Robert Davis, but I spoke with Brad Maryan (Herpetology, Department of Terrestrial Vertebrates, Museum of Natural Science) regarding your

queries. Brad noted that there has been little research in Western Australia regarding tadpoles. He was unaware of any evidence of tadpoles being affected by changes in water temperature, but suggested that, like other animals, they may suffer some effects from 'shock'. With regard to diseases, given that you are only moving them within your own property and at the tadpole stage, the risk of transferring disease would be low. Whether the frogs are being transferred to suitable habitat is a difficult question, a large component of which relates to what else is living in the dam in the way of predators and competition. It may also be valuable to consider not only the impacts on the tadpoles being moved, but also on other species living in the dam.

Brad noted that frogs have very rapid life cycles in order to make the most of suitable climatic conditions e.g. there are frogs that live in the desert where they may not get rain for years! In theory, the strongest survive and the species adapt. So, although the negative impacts of you moving frogs between water bodies within your own property may be low, it may not be the best for those frogs in the long-term. - *Ed.*