

SPOTTED-THIGHED FROGS IN THE BATHROOM!

Sylvia Leighton

It is lovely to experience wildlife living up close in our homes but sometimes we have to be practical about the impacts and safety of their presence. When more than 40 Spotted-thighed Tree Frogs, *Litoria cyclorhynchus*, decided to permanently set up residence in LFW member Pattie Leighton's bathroom on her LFW property 100 kms east of Albany, it was time to make a decision about whether this was the most sensible in-house resident to have. Not only did the daily smell of their numerous droppings on the bathroom floor become a little bit pungent, it also attracted a large number of Tiger Snakes into the surrounding farm garden and inside the bathroom.

The Spotted-thighed Tree Frog, is a particularly beautiful Western Australian species with bright black and yellow markings on its thigh area. It is endemic to the south-west of WA and has a range which begins about 60km east of Albany on the south coast, extends north to Broomehill and eastward to Israelite Bay with its northern boundary fringing the arid zone north of Scadden. Its natural habitats are rivers, swamps, freshwater lakes and wetlands.

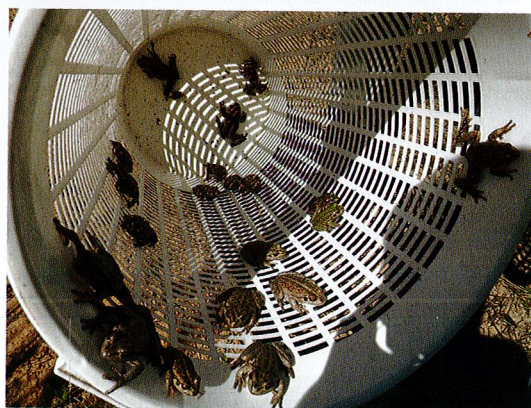
The frog is similar in appearance to its western cousin, the well-known Motorbike Frog, *L. moorei*, bearing dark green or brownish patches with bronze or gold highlights on its back. Males can be up to 65mm, and females up to 77mm. However the *L. cyclorhynchus* can be differentiated by the numerous yellowish spots on a black background found on the underside of the rear legs and the underside margins of the frog's belly. The frogs have a spring breeding season but can be heard calling right through into December with summer rain events.



Above: *Litoria cyclorhynchus* with its back legs stretched out to show the handsome spotted thighs. (Note, holding it carefully like this does not hurt the frog.).
Below, the frog as it sits normally.

The wooden rafters and relatively cooler conditions in Pattie's bathroom provide the frogs with an attractive elevated safe haven during the day. However, in the evening they all descend down to the ground to go hunting for beetles, earwigs, moths and any other small-sized snacks in the garden. Tiger snakes wait for the frogs to come down to ground level and the scream of a frog being consumed by a scaly predator is a regular nocturnal sound.

After another close call with a Tiger Snake inside the bathroom, Pattie decided she needed to remove some of the population and put them back out into the natural environment. In summer all seasonal wetlands on the farm are dry and the creekline pools become a bit too brackish, so a nice freshwater farm dam which has sedges, rushes and a remnant bush clump around



A laundry basket full of frogs. You have to be quick to get a lid on!
Photos: Sylvia Leighton

it was selected as their new home. It was quite a performance catching twenty jumping, crawling, wriggling frogs and placing them in a large lidded container. Pattie's seven year old grandson helped with the release and most of the frogs seemed happy with their new home!