



Fowlers Gap Biodiversity Checklist Frogs

We do not normally associate dry arid regions with water-loving frogs. However, the amphibians (frogs and toads, newts and salamanders, worm-like Gymnophnians) have been around for 270 million years and have adapted to all but the coolest climates. Australia only has frogs and toads and these and the rest of the Amphibia seem to have finally met their match with post-industrial Man challenging them with water and air pollution, global warming and global travel and trade breaching continental disease barriers. Thus appreciate Fowlers Gap's frogs while you can. The first one you are likely to meet will seem to defy all the above problems for the frogs and toads since it will be peering up at you from a flush toilet bowl! You will have met *Litoria rubella*, the **Desert Tree Frog**. Most of the others are more elusive. *Cyclorana platycephala*, the **Water-holding Frog** will be cocooned in a burrow amidst the fan-like roots of a Mulga or other acacia awaiting a drenching rain. In the warmer months, a heavy rainfall will see not only the desert bloom but also it will seem like it has been raining frogs. So if you get stuck on the Station in a downpour then grab the torch and muddy your boots and go frogging. Otherwise go out at night around the earthen tanks or other water bodies. Fowlers Creek is a good area since there are small billabongs as you walk north past the Homestead Creek intersection. The original house tank just beyond the woolshed on the northern bank of Homestead Creek may have some frogs. Further away the downstream bases of Lake and Nelia Dams sometimes have frogs when they support reeds from leakage through the dam wall.

Arid-zone frogs have explosive breeding assemblages so if they are around after rain you should certainly here them. They do not necessarily make themselves conspicuous so you have to track down the source of the sound. If you are confused get a second

person to approach from another direction and see where you cross over. Some species like the **Desert Tree Frogs** get into water tanks and let out a booming call in these large 'echo chambers'. When you find your frog, look but do not touch! You can damage a frog's skin by inappropriate handling and cause fungal or other diseases to invade. You may inadvertently transmit something benign to you but dangerous to a frog on your hand.

The following is a checklist of the frogs in the Atlas of NSW Wildlife for this region. It is quite possible that a few more species are here on Fowlers Gap. If you find an unidentifiable frog, then make a note of the characteristics of your find or take a picture or record its call and inform the staff. This is a checklist so to make a precise identification then arm yourself with one of the many excellent guides recommended at the end of this checklist.

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- ❑ *Limnodynastes flectcheri*, **Long-thumbed Frog**
Light grey or brown back with scattered, large dark brown or black blotches. 50 mm snout-vent length. Call is a single dog-like 'bark'. Shelters under logs, piles of debris or in crevices.
 - ❑ *Lymnodynastyes tasmaniensis*, **Spotted Grass Frog**
Like brown to rich olive-green back with large, regular dark-brown blotches. 45 mm snout-vent length. Call is a very rapid 'uk-uk-uk'. Found on the grassy borders of temporary swamps and creeks.



- ❑ *Neobatrachus centralis*, **Trilling Frog**
Pale brown or yellow back, with smaller irregular dark patches, and narrow pale stripe down midline. Size 55 mm snout-vent length. Call is a high-pitched trill. One of four burrowing species that emerges on flooded claypans to breed in summer or autumn.

- ❑ *Neobatrachus sudelli*, **Common Spadefoot Toad**
Grey, brown, yellow or reddish-brown back with large dark brown or olive patches or marbling. Size 40 mm snout-vent length. Call is a long high-pitched trill. Burrowing frog that emerges on flooded claypans or roadside pools after summer rain.
- ❑ *Cyclorana platycephala*, **Water-holding Frog**
Dull olive-grey or olive-green back or grey with light-green patches. Size 60 mm snout-vent length. Call is a drawn out, snoring 'maw-w-w-w-...maw-w-w-w'. Can stay underground cocooned in a burrow for several years. Breeds on flooded claypans, in pools or creeks after heavy spring or summer rains.
- ❑ *Cyclorana verrucosa*
Grey-brown to olive-brown back with irregular dark patches and pale stripe. Size 45 mm snout-vent length. Call is a long moaning growl. Breeds in flooded depressions and billabongs after spring or summer rains.



- ❑ *Litoria caerulea* **Green Tree Frog**
Dark green above with scattered white spots on sides and occasionally on the back. Ventrums are white and tympanum distinct. Size 100 mm snout-vent length. Call is a repeated deep 'crawk-crawk'. Found in a large variety of habitats including human dwellings, downpipes, tanks and troughs, and windmills.
- ❑ *Litoria rubella*, **Desert Tree Frog**
Grey-brown or fawn back with broad darker stripe and dark flecks; black eye stripe. Size 35 mm snout-vent length. Call is a long rattle. Found near creeks and breeds on inundated areas. Lives in trees (and houses) away from water and forages on humid nights.

Guides:

Barker, J. and Grigg, G. 1977. *A Field Guide to Australian Frogs*. Rigby, Adelaide.
 Cogger, H.G. 2000. *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*. 6th Edition. New Holland Publishers, Sydney.
 Tyler, M.J. 1994. *Australian Frogs. A natural history*. Reed Books, Chatswood.

This guide is part of a UNSW research project in collaboration with the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism and NSW National Parks and Wildlife

Service. The aim of this project is to develop and implement products to support a vibrant wildlife tourism industry in the rangelands of the Outback. Some more information can be found at our web site

<http://www.bios.unsw.edu.au/rootourism/>.

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ARID ZONE RESEARCH STATION