Frogs from the South East of South Australia

Government of South Australia

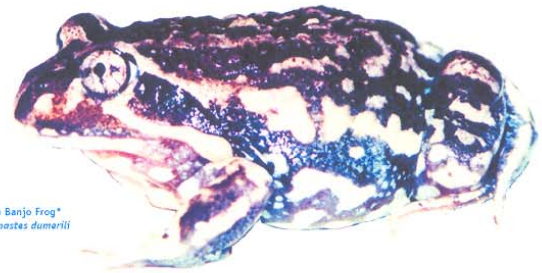
WATERWATCH South East
Communities Caring for Catchments

Frog Census

Southern Bell Frog
Litoria raniformis

The Southern Bell Frog is found throughout the swamps of the South East. Characterised by a loud barking call and colourful skin patterns, this species is one which specialises in feeding on other frogs. It has a pale green mid-dorsal stripe with large black spots on its back. The back is rough and warty, the belly is coarsely granular and the thighs turquoise. The fingers are not webbed, but the toes are almost fully webbed.

Size: Males 55-65 mm; Females 60-104 mm.
Habitat: Found in large permanent waterbodies with abundant growth of vegetation near the bank.
Breeding: The eggs are pigmented and deposited in a floating raft which later sinks. The tadpoles can grow up to 100 mm long.
Mating call: A long, medium pitched, modulated growl, followed by a series of short grunts.



Eastern Banjo Frog*
Limnodynastes dumerili

The Eastern Banjo Frog is a common inhabitant of wetlands and rivers. It is a medium to large frog with a broad, rounded head and short, thick limbs. Large glands are present on the tibia and the edge of the mouth. Two subspecies are found in South Australia:

- *L. dumerili dumerili* has a rough, warty, dark brown or black body, sometimes with a dorsal stripe. The sides are marked with bronze, purple or black but the belly is usually cream or white with only slight flecking, if any. Toes are moderately webbed. It is found from the Eyre Peninsula and lower Flinders Ranges to the Murray Valley and upper South East.
- *L. dumerili variegatus*, found only in the lower South East, has dark patches on a pale back, a highly variegated belly, unwebbed toes and no dorsal stripe.

Size: Males 52-70 mm; Females 52-83 mm.
Habitat: Burrows in loamy soils and emerges to feed and breed after rains. Commonly seen crossing roads on rainy nights.
Breeding: A large foam nest containing up to 4000 eggs is laid in water, attached to vegetation. Females have flanges on their fingers that are used during mating to carry air bubbles from the surface of the water into the foam nest to oxygenate the eggs.
Mating call: A single musical 'bonk'.

Brown Striped Marsh Frog
Limnodynastes peroni

The Brown Striped Marsh Frog is an attractive frog whose dorsal surface is marked with brown stripes and often a pale mid-dorsal stripe. The stripes break up laterally to form a series of blotches. The belly is white and males often have a yellow and brown mottled throat. The iris of the eye is golden at the top and dark brown at the bottom. The arms of females tend to be smaller and a long nuptial spine on the tip of the male's thumb aids in mating.

Size: Males 48-69 mm; Females 46-73 mm.
Habitat: In South Australia it is limited to the South East, commonly found in wetlands and swamps. During the day it hides under stones, leaf litter, logs or in burrows.
Breeding: 700-1000 small unpigmented eggs are laid in a foam nest attached to vegetation at the water's edge. In the lower South East females do not produce a foam nest.
Mating call: A single loud 'pok'.

Peron's Tree Frog
Litoria peroni

Peron's Tree Frog has only recently been found in a few Red Gum swamps in the South East. It is mostly grey or brown and has a number of small, pale-greenish spots. The skin fold above its tympanum, or ear, is marked by a thin black line. The back of the thighs are heavily marked with black on yellow or orange. The pupil is in the form of a cross.

Size: Males 44-53 mm; Females 46-65 mm.
Habitat: By day Peron's Tree Frog is found beneath loose bark on the trunks of gum trees next to water. By night they move to vegetation near the water.
Breeding: Probably between October and January. They begin to call during September. The tadpoles are a pale golden yellow with dark stripes down their sides.
Mating call: A long series of 29-50 explosive notes, like a 'maniacal cackle'.

Painted Frog
Neobatrachus pictus

Living in woodland, mallee, open and disturbed areas, the Painted Frog has no obvious site preferences. The species is moderately sized, stockily built with short limbs and is generally deep olive with darker markings on the head and body. The eye is prominent and has a vertical pupil. The tympanum (ear) is not visible. The fingers are cylindrical and lack webbing. The toes are extensively webbed. The Painted Frog's skin is smooth, except during the mating season when the male will develop tiny black thorns. It also has a black horn-like 'shovel' on the foot.

Size: Males 46-58 mm; Females 48-55 mm.
Habitat: Mostly open grassland and woodland.
Breeding: About 1000 yellow eggs are laid in a chain entwined with submerged vegetation.
Mating call: A long, rapidly pulsed, musical trill.

Sudell's Frog
Neobatrachus sudellii

Sudell's Frog is a burrowing frog that is very similar to the Painted frog, but can be distinguished by the patterns on its back. The clearly defined patterns are mostly olive or pale green on a dark brown or tan background. A stripe along its back may also be evident. At a first quick glance it may be confused with the Spotted Grass Frog. It is commonly found in large numbers crossing roads at night after rain.

Size: Males 38-44 mm; Females 46-49 mm.
Habitat: Open grassy woodland or shrubland.
Breeding: The male calls while floating in the water. Spawn is deposited in elongated strands that become tangled in submerged vegetation. The tadpole is grey with a metallic sheen.
Mating call: A short 'musical trill'.

Spotted Grass Frog
Limnodynastes tasmaniensis

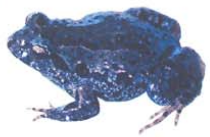
The Spotted Grass Frog is the most common frog in Australia. It has olive, green or brown spots on a pale background which may change over the course of the day. The ventral (lower) surface of the body is smooth and white. Breeding males have a dark yellow/green throat. Many specimens have a mid-dorsal stripe that may be white, yellow or red. Females have flanges (flaps of skin) on the first two fingers.

Size: Males 31-42 mm; Females 32-47 mm.
Habitat: A widespread species, habitat includes marshy country, creek edges and wetlands.
Breeding: Males call from the edge of shallow water, often hidden in vegetation. A foam nest of 90-1300 eggs is laid floating in water attached to vegetation
Mating call: A short, single 'click'.

Brown Tree Frog
Litoria ewingi

The Brown Tree Frog is a slender, medium sized frog with a broad head and rounded snout. A wide and undivided band runs along its back. It is generally pale brown with a narrow, black or brown stripe from the snout to the shoulder and a pale stripe beneath the eye, however, in the South East they are often green in colour. The thighs are orange and may have black spots. The fingers are unwebbed and the toes are half webbed. The ear is distinct.

Size: Males 22-40 mm; Females 32-46 mm.
Habitat: It can be found on the ground, in vegetation, or under rocks near permanent streams or pools.
Breeding: Occurs anytime during the year. Eggs are deposited in small clumps attached to submerged vegetation.
Mating call: A loud, distinctive, high pitched 'weep-eep-eep' of 10 to 20 notes.



Smooth Frog
Geocrinia laevis

In South Australia the Smooth Frog is restricted to the south east of the State. It is a medium sized frog with short limbs and smooth skin. Pale pink patches are present underneath the legs and in the groin. The belly tends to be mottled or densely covered with grey or dark brown flecks. It is easily confused with *Crinia signifera* or *Pseudophryne* species.

Size: Males 23-27 mm; Females 22-35 mm.
Habitat: Found amongst leaf litter in dry sclerophyll (*Eucalyptus*) and pine forests subject to temporary flooding.
Breeding: The Smooth Frog does not breed in water, instead it lays large unpigmented eggs in loose, elongated masses attached to moist vegetation. Following flooding, tadpoles hatch in the water and complete development in about six months.
Mating call: Call consists of a variable number of pulses, the first often being longer than the rest. 'cra-a-a-a-a-a-a-ck....cra-a-a-ck...cra-a-ck'.

Southern Toadlet
Pseudophryne semimarmorata

The Southern Toadlet is a small frog with short limbs, fingers and toes. Brilliant yellow, red or orange areas are present under the limbs and body. The back is dark (olive green to brown) with irregular darker flecks. The belly is marbled black and white or black and blue. In South Australia, it is restricted to the lower South East, occurring south along a line from Kingston to Naracoorte.

Size: Males 25-28 mm; Females 25-33 mm.
Habitat: Found in *Eucalyptus* forests subject to flooding. It shelters under logs and leaf litter in small tunnels.
Breeding: During autumn, the frog lays up to 200 pigmented, loosely clumped eggs in moist spots on land. Early development occurs inside the egg.
Mating call: A harsh, short and slowly repeated grating 'cre-e-ek'.

Bibron's Toadlet
Pseudophryne bibroni

Although the most abundant and widespread of its genus, Bibron's Toadlet is believed to have become less abundant in recent times. It is generally found singularly or in low numbers under rocks and logs. Bibron's Toadlet is brown to almost black above with a scattering of darker flecks and reddish spots and may have a yellow area around the region of the anus. The belly is marbled black and white. Its skin can be smooth or granular and is usually scattered with a few warts.

Size: Males 22-30 mm; Females 25-32 mm.
Habitat: Found in damp areas with some cover such as logs and stones.
Breeding: Calling begins in February and continues until August. Eggs are deposited in damp leaf litter under logs and stones. Hatching of well-developed tadpoles occurs after rains flood the area.
Mating call: A short, grating, upwardly inflected 'ark'.

Common Froglet
Crinia signifera

The Common Froglet is the most commonly found frog in South Australia. It has highly variable skin colour and texture, even within populations. The skin may be plain, striped or spotted, smooth, warty or rigid. The belly is usually white with black splotches.

Size: Males 18-25 mm; Females 19-28 mm.
Habitat: Found beneath rocks, vegetation and debris at the edge of creeks, ponds, wetlands and areas of seepage. During dry periods the frog may be found away from water sources.
Breeding: Breeds throughout the year except in mid summer. Eggs are laid in small bunches of 100-150 in shallow water.
Mating call: Rapidly repeated 'crick...crick...crick'.

Photographs: Steve Walker & *Allan Cotton