

October 2003

# Frogwatch

ACT & REGION  
NATIONAL WATER WEEK  
COMMUNITY FROGWATCH CENSUS REPORT

Produced by the  
*Ginninderra*  
*Catchment Group*



environment ACT  
ACT URBAN SERVICES



**ACT Region  
October 2003 National Water Week  
Community Frogwatch Census Report**

The Australian Capital Territory 2003 National Water Week Community Frogwatch Program was carried out with the assistance of funds made available by the ACT Government under the ACT Government Environment Grants Program.

**Prepared by:**

Rachelle McConville  
Nigel Philpot

**Frogwatch Technical Advisory Team**

Rachelle McConville  
Nigel Philpot  
Murray Evans  
Peter Ormay  
Will Osborne

**For further information contact:**

Rachelle McConville  
ACT Frogwatch Coordinator  
Ginninderra Catchment Group  
Phone: 6278 3309  
Email: [gcg@austarmetro.com.au](mailto:gcg@austarmetro.com.au)  
Fax: 6278 3926  
Mail: PO Box 446  
Holt, ACT, 2615

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A HUGE THANK YOU goes to all the community participants who volunteered their time and effort for the ACT National Water Week Frogwatch Census. The response from volunteers this year has been overwhelming, with over 150 people taking part. Thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment to making the program such a success.

The Australian Capital Territory 2003 National Water Week Community Frogwatch Program was carried out with the assistance of funds made available by the ACT Government under the ACT Government Environment Grants Program.

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# 1. SUMMARY

Frog species are widely recognised as indicators of environmental health and their presence can indicate good water quality and the availability of high quality habitat. Conversely, the absence or decline of frog populations can indicate unhealthy or degraded catchments.

In 2002, ACT Waterwatch initiated the ACT Region National Water Week Community Frogwatch Census, modeled on the Ginninderra Catchment Group's successful Frogwatch Program. Over 40 volunteers monitored frog calls at 29 sites for the 2002 Census.

In 2003 the Frogwatch Census expanded dramatically to include 150 community participants and close to 120 sites, providing a snapshot of frog species and abundance in the ACT Region. Twenty-seven of the Frogwatch sites were affected by the January 2003 bushfires. The information collected will help to identify future community monitoring and action programs that will create a more frog friendly Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment.

## **The Aim of the Program is:**

To conduct an ACT & Upper Murrumbidgee Community Frogwatch Census that will generate significant information about the presence and abundance of frog populations in the region.

## **The Objectives of the Program include:**

### ***Census Information Objectives***

- Increase understanding of frog distribution and abundance;
- Increase knowledge and understanding about the health of our waterways;
- Monitor the impacts of bushfires and drought on our local ecosystems and catchments;
- Monitor the impact of bushfires on local wildlife, and track recovery rates;
- Provide supplemental information to Environment ACT's Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit's professional frog monitoring program; and
- Continue the collection of important frog monitoring data to enhance previous studies.

### ***Community Capacity Building Objectives***

- Provide an exciting, hands-on opportunity for community engagement in Natural Resource Management (NRM);
- Provide opportunities for community involvement in wildlife monitoring;
- Provide CAMPFIRE (Community Assessment Monitoring Program for Fire Impacted River Ecology) and Waterwatch groups the opportunity to broaden their monitoring activities;
- Increase community participation in a range of important issues such as biodiversity, water quality, habitat restoration and construction and other important NRM projects;
- Facilitate community monitoring and evaluation of NRM on-ground works, eg wetland development, willow removal and revegetation projects; and
- Increase the awareness of frog populations and their habitat requirements.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Frogwatch participants attended one of three Frogwatch Seminars where they learnt about the different frog species in the region and their calls, basic safety and site selection guidelines, procedures for preventing the spread of potential frog pathogens, frog identification techniques and procedures for undertaking and recording Frogwatch observations.

All participants received a Frogwatch Kit, which contained:

- The Frogwatch Monitoring Plan;
- A list of frog species likely to be calling during spring, with descriptions of habitat and calls;
- Pathogen Control Guidelines;
- Frog Facts!;
- Procedures for Monitoring Frog Calls;
- Field Data Sheets;
- Contact Details and Feedback Forms;
- An audio CD - "Frog Calls of the ACT" by Ederic Slater;
- An Environment ACT Thermometer; and
- A blank cassette tape.

Each participant or group then registered their Frogwatch site(s). Participants were encouraged to select useful sites that had intrinsic value to the program. For example, a Waterwatch monitoring site, a newly constructed wetland area, an environmentally sensitive or bushfire affected area, proposed restoration sites, farm dams, or a site in which they have a particular interest.

Frog calls were then monitored by community volunteers at sites across the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment according to the following guidelines:

Season	Dates	Time of Day	How Often	Duration
Spring	19 <sup>th</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2003 (National Water Week)	During the 2 hours after dark (eg. between about 7 - 9 pm during October)	On at least one evening during National Water Week 2003	Tape recording of frog calls for 5-10 minutes

At each site, Frogwatchers recorded details about:

- Site Location;
- Habitat;
- Vegetation;
- Weather conditions; and
- Frogs Species observed.

These details were recorded onto Field Data Sheets. Participants took tape recordings of the sounds present during the early evening at their site. Even if there were no frogs calling, the recording and data collected were submitted. This information was then sent to the Frogwatch Coordinator for confirmation.

All audio tapes were checked for accuracy of identification by the Frogwatch Coordinator. A number of the tapes were also checked by Peter Ormay of Environment ACT Wildlife research and Monitoring, to confirm unusual species or calls that were difficult to distinguish.

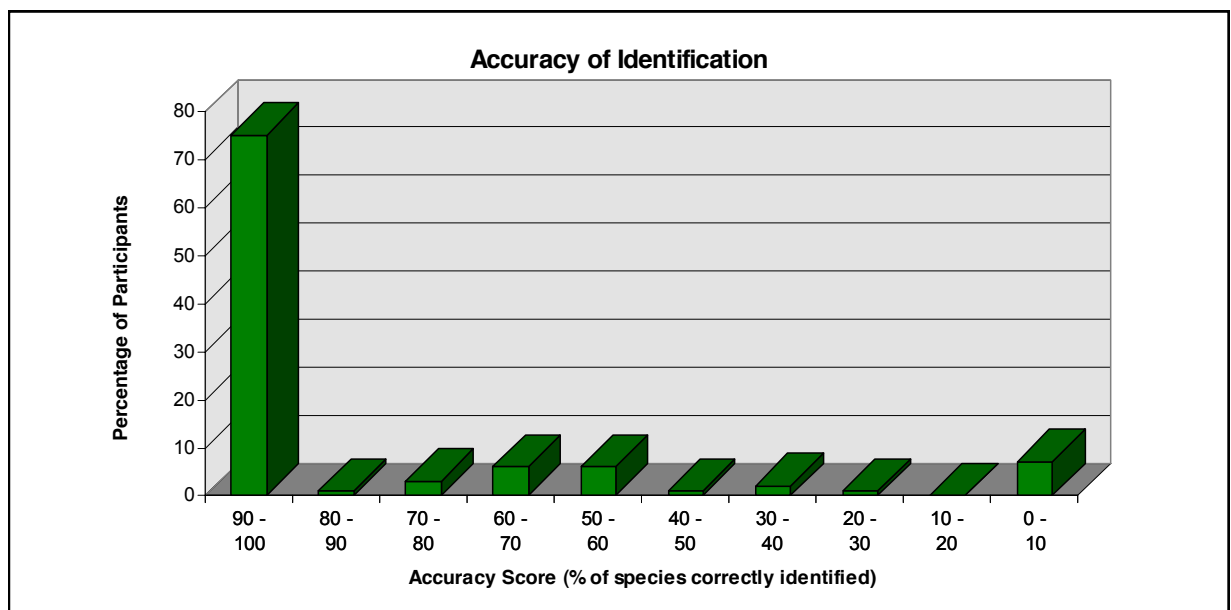
### 3. QUALITY ASSURANCE / QUALITY CONTROL

The data collected for the 2003 ACT Region National Water Week Community Frogwatch Census has undergone a strict process that ensures the quality of the data is known. The quality control procedures employed include:

- Monitoring of calls at all sites was undertaken during National Water Week, 19 - 26 October 2003, during the first 2 hours after dark. Observations taken outside of these specified times are highlighted in *italics* in the results section of this report (Section 5).
- Audio recordings were taken at all monitoring sites. These recordings were then used to confirm identification of species and the number of frogs calling. This data was assessed by the Frogwatch Coordinator. The Environment ACT Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit investigated unusual or difficult results. Any data that has not been confirmed is not included in this report.

As shown in the chart below, over 70% of participants were able to identify all species correctly.

**FIGURE 1. Frogwatch Participants' Accuracy Score**



# 4. FROGWATCH MONITORING SITES

Figure 2. Location of Frogwatch Monitoring Sites, Frogwatch Census October 2003

