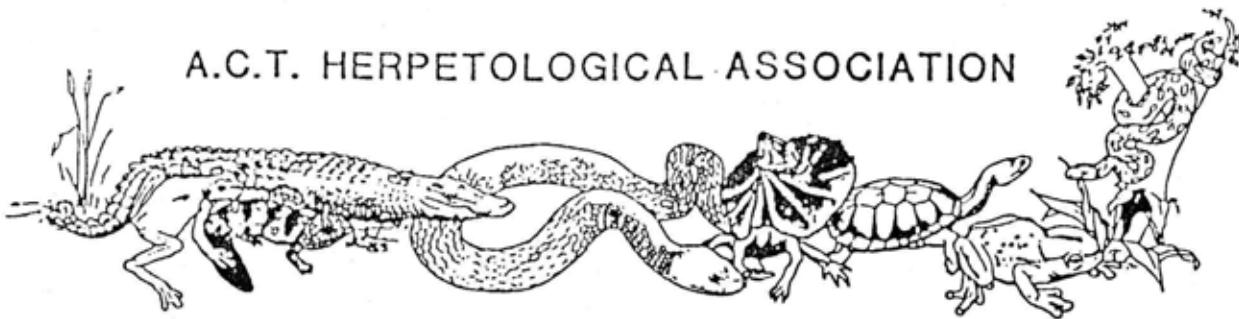


Sept 88

David Carter
A.N.U.

A.C.T. HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

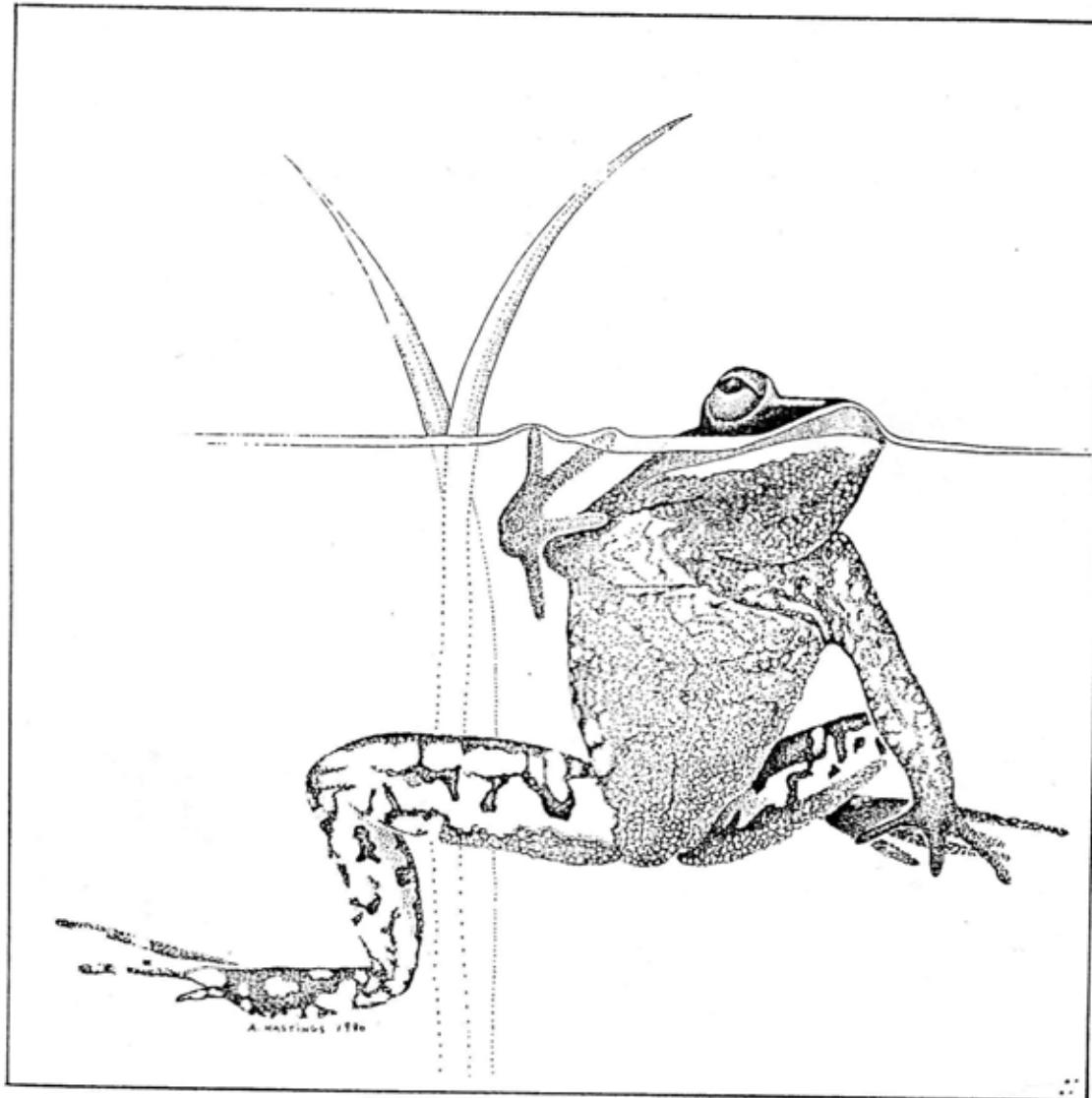


Meeting

The next meeting of the A.C.T. Herpetological Association will be on Monday 17th October at the Department of Zoology, A.N.U. The meeting will be held in the Lecture Theatre near the usual meeting place in the tea room. There is a student class on the same evening in the tea room hence our need to meet in the lecture theatre.

Committee meeting 7.30 pm. General meeting and talk 8.00 pm.

The talk to be given by Will Osborne is called "Frogs of the A.C.T.".



Excursions

Following the very interesting talk on the reptiles and frogs of the Bathurst district given by Gavin Waters, a small but determined group from the association met the next morning (Saturday) at Coppins Crossing to search for the rare legless lizard Aprasia parapulchella. We spent about an hour and a half carefully searching beneath stones, making sure to place each one back in place so as to not disturb the reptile habitat. During the search we found the amazing total of eleven specimens of this endangered species!!!! After a brief close look at a few of the individuals each was carefully released back under the stones that they were found under. This is the largest number of individuals that has been found at any one site during a single visit. Thankyou to those members who attended at short notice.

Aprasia parapulchella is known from only a few sites in and near the A.C.T and from one isolated locality near Tarcutta in N.S.W. The Land and Wildlife unit of the A.C.T Parks and Conservation Service is currently preparing a report on the distribution and Conservation of this rare lizard.

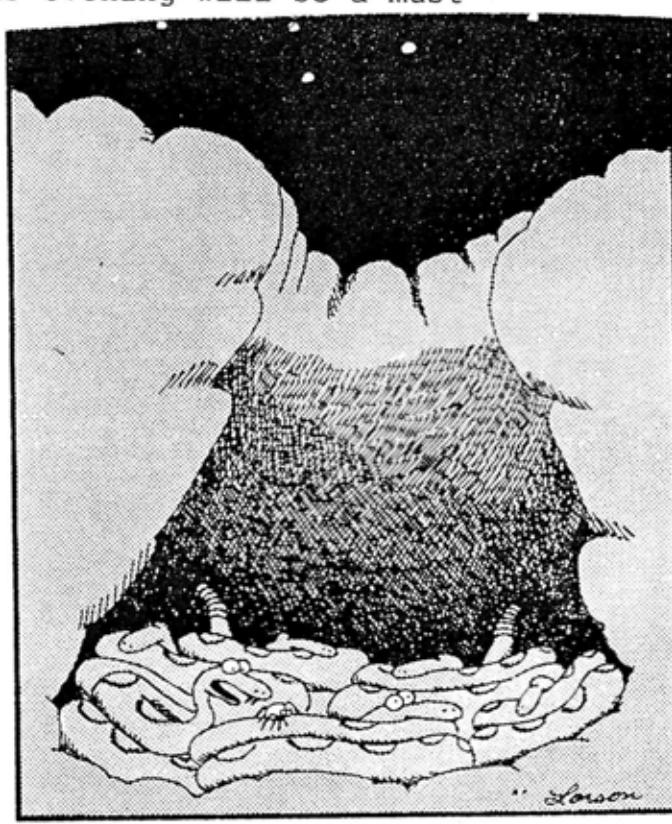
Frog trip Will Osborne is taking a night walk to listen to frog calls (weather permitting) on the evening of Tuesday 18th October the night after our next meeting. Details available at next meeting or from Will on 462127.

November meeting/workshop

Keep the evening of 28 November (Monday) clear for a workshop on the reptiles of the A.C.T. to be run by two local herpetologists John Wombey and Richard Longmore. I am informed that all species in the A.C.T. will be covered, so if you are having trouble identifying fleet-footed skinks, this evening will be a must



"Look at this mob. We'll be lucky if there's a seat cushion left."



"Doreen! There's a spider on you! One of those big, hairy, brown ones with the long legs that can move like the wind itself!"

Last of the swamp tortoises dying for want of sex



Western swamp tortoises in Perth Zoo . . . they are the last hope of saving our most endangered species from extinction — Picture: TOM ROVIS-HERMANN

By DERYN THORPE

WESTERN swamp tortoises don't have much going for them. Not only do they rate as Australia's most endangered species, they also have a remarkably conservative sex life.

"They don't mate until they are aged at least 15, and even then the females are unlikely to produce more than three or four offspring at a time.

Added to their problems, "home"

is the once extensive wetlands of Perth, which have been reduced by human settlement to an area little bigger than a muddy pond for most

The total population of the hand-sized creatures had fallen below 50 — more than a quarter in refuge at Perth Zoo.

The zoo's 13 tortoises have special significance: the future of their species lies with them.

A new program, sponsored by the State's Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the World Wildlife Fund, hopes to preserve them through breeding in captivity.

But only a few animals have been

bred during the past 20 years at the

zoo, and the last female was back in 1981.

Dr Andrew Burbidge, a scientist with CALM, has been studying the reptiles since 1968 and realises saving them will be difficult.

"Although techniques have been developed for the artificial incubation of the eggs, few eggs have been produced by captives, and the hatching growth rates are far from satisfactory," Dr Burbidge said.

Although he believes it is essential to protect the tortoises' natural environment so breeding programs

can eventually return the animal to

the wild, he sees the captive breeding program as the only hope left.

But scientists can do nothing to

protect the tortoises from drought.

One small colony at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve is thought to have died out because of the dry winters and predatory foxes.

Scientists from CALM are so concerned about the tortoises living at Ellen Brook that they make regular patrols and try to control the numbers of red foxes — which dig up the eggs and take a heavy toll of the tortoises themselves.

But scientists can do nothing to

protect the tortoises from drought.

One small colony at Twin Swamps

Nature Reserve is thought to have

died out because of the dry winters

and predatory foxes.

discovered 30 years ago — 120 years after the first sighting.

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