History of Office Bearers

Formation Committee (April 1964):- MJ Littlejohn (Convenor); State Reps IR Straughan (Qld), FJ Mitchell (SA), HG Cogger (NSW), G Storr (WA), RE Barwick (ACT), JW Warren (Vic), AK Lee (Editor).

First AGM (23 August 1965):- President MJ Littlejohn, Vice-President NG Stephenson, Secretary-Treasurer AA Martin, Asst Secretary-Treasurer KJ Wilson, Ordinary Members FJ Mitchell and IR Straughan, Editor AK Lee.


SECRETARY/TREASURER:- AA Martin (1965-67); GF Watson (1967-72); LA Moffatt (1973-75); J Caughley (1975-76); RWG Jenkins (1976-77); M Davies (1978-83); G Courtice (1983-87); J Wombey (1987-99); S Keogh (1999-2003); N Mitchell (2004-5); E. Wapstra (2005-2008); G Shea (2008-2010); B Phillips (2011-)


EDITOR:- AK Lee (1965-67); AA Martin (1967-73); GC Grigg (1973-76); JD Roberts (1976-82); L Taplin (1982-84); R Longmore (1984-99); JM Hero (1999-2007); DS Bower (2007-)

PUBLIC OFFICER:- R Longmore (1983-2007); S Keogh (2008-).

HONORARY MEMBERS:- JA Moore (1969-2002); MJ Littlejohn (1982); HG Cogger (1996); J Wombey (1999); R Longmore (1999); M Tyler (2010); M Davies (2010); A Martin (2010); GF Watson (2010)

COAT-OF-ARMS Design:- GF Watson.

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Editor’s Report

Spring has arrived and the dragons are nesting, the skinks are tail wagging and herpetologists are reemerging from their offices. Much has happened between newsletters with both national and international herpetological conventions and more coming soon.

Last year the mountain village of Paluma was overrun by strange people wearing reptile related clothing (Glenn has the best shirts), making strange vocalisations and posing as Captain Cook. The impressive diversity and quality of reptiles in North Queensland made the trip an exciting venture for many of us. I personally embarked on an adventure with the Newcastle froglab from Cairns across to Boojumulla (Lawn Hill) National Park where we saw gulf snapping turtles (*Elseya lavorackorum*), file snakes (*Acrochordas arafurae*) and some rather sweet crocodiles.

This year saw a larger migration of herpetologists across to colder climes. The gigantic contingent of Aussies that were squashed into Mahony and Sons pub on the University of British Columbia campus during the AGM felt just like an ASH. This was solidified upon a trip to the city where amplexing dance moves were competitively displayed by Simon Clulow, Marc Hero and Dave Hunter. The greatest plenary I’ve ever seen was given by Tyrone Hayes from University of California, Berkeley on his work on Atrazine. Professor Hayes connected with the audience through comedy that drew on his background as an African-American in a manner that had the crowd roaring with laughter for the entire 50 minutes. The conference ran 14 concurrent sessions on every aspect of herpetology and was a brilliant opportunity to get fit between sessions.

No doubt all this talk of amplexus and Glenn Shea is making your mouth water for the next opportunity to aggregate together and so it should! I’m more than happy to inform you that you won’t have to wait long and the next ASH conference is just around the corner in January on the central coast. The conference location seems to be ideal, tucked away on a peninsula surrounded by the beautiful Lake Macquarie. Dorm style accommodation sleeping < 7 people per room is available as well as cabins for families. We will have self catered bars to ensure collaboration is facilitated to the best of our ability and the camp fire has a stadium to ensure that Matt Greenlees’ interpretive dance of metamorphosing cane toads can be appreciated by all.

Til then,
Deb Bower
Editor
THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF HERPETOLOGISTS
INCORPORATED

NEW MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Australian Society of Herpetologists Inc. is a society for professional herpetologists and publishing amateurs. The Society is incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory and is administered by a council of seven members. The Society meets at intervals of between 12 and 18 months, usually in a residential situation away from a major city. Meetings take the form of sessions of scientific papers and a business meeting.

Membership is by nomination by two financial members of the Society who will vouch for the acceptability of the prospective applicant.

Subscription fees are currently AUS$35.00 per annum for non-students and $15.00 for full-time students. All fees must be tendered in Australian Currency and cheques made payable to: Australian Society of Herpetology Inc. Fees are due in June every year. Alternatively please deposit your subscription fee into the account below. If you choose this payment option, please be sure to include your name on the payee transaction details to allow us to keep a record of who has paid, and also send this form separately in hard copy.

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NOMINATION FORM

I hereby nominate……………………… …………….. of (postal address) ……………………………………………………………………………

Email (of new member): ……………………………………………………for membership of the Australian Society of Herpetologists Incorporated, being satisfied that he/she fills the criteria for membership.

Signed (nominator) ……………………………………………………………………………
Always wanted to do something for the people?

Live in a Territory that begins with Northern or Australian Capital?

Skilled at emailing people repetitively?

You too can be a regional reporter and claim the victorious fame that gets your name in the ASH newsletter. Email Deb.Bower@newcastle.edu.au for more information.

ASH Website: http://australiansocietyofherpetologists.org/index.html

Please direct all membership enquiries to the Treasurer, Ben Phillips. Membership forms can be downloaded from the ASH web site. Newsletter feedback can be given to Deb Bower. All other enquiries should be directed to the Secretary, Eridani Mulder.

This newsletter is for private circulation amongst members of the Australian Society of Herpetologists Incorporated. Inclusion of any information does not constitute publication. Any original research material included here should not be reproduced or referred to without the permission of the author and the editor of the Newsletter.
Conference Early Announcement
37th Meeting of the
Australian Society of Herpetologists

29th January – 1st February 2013 at Point Wolstoncroft

Nestled on Lake Macquarie on the central coast of NSW, Point Wolstoncroft sport and recreation centre is located 45 minutes south of Newcastle and one hour north of Sydney. The centre offers the perfect range of facilities for an ASH conference including a choice of bunk style or cottage accommodation, a campfire area, beautiful bushland surrounds with walking trail and swamp, volleyball court and comfortable conference room with lake views!

More details on registration, symposia, accommodation and activities coming soon. Stay tuned at http://www.australiassocietyofherpetologists.org/ or join the mailing list by emailing secretaryash@gmail.com

Calls for symposia now open!
Send proposals to Deb.Bower@newcastle.edu.au
Queensland

Alford-Schwarzkopf-Phillips Labs

Stephen Zozaya spends nearly all his time gallivanting about the country, chasing reptiles, frogs, and the like. When at all possible, attempts are made to blind wildlife with multiple camera flashes. He has also been thinking a lot about native and introduced house geckos, as well as briefly contemplating thermal acclimation in rainforest skinks. Maybe one day all this thinking will result in a publication or two. For now, though, there are herps to harass.

Ben Phillips has now convinced various computers to write ASH receipts for him and so now has even more time to think about dispersal on range edges. With regard to this preoccupation, he continues to work primarily on lizards, dung beetles (lizard food), and simulations, but keeps finding side-projects. Research highlights from the last twelve months include identifying a simple way to prevent toads reaching the Pilbara (they can be stopped!), and observing what looks like an evolutionarily driven increase in virulence of chytrid fungus in Central America. Both of which follow from pondering dispersal on range edges. Yes, really.

Matthew Vickers is continuing a PhD project examining the minutiae of behavioural thermoregulation. It looks as though most people were right: behavioural thermoregulation exists. Interestingly, it looks like a null model for behavioural thermoregulation can be used to examine the benefit of thermoregulation, reveal what looks to be unexploited niche space, and expand the number of times the term behavioural thermoregulation can be used in a three sentence blurb.

Stewart Macdonald is examining the drivers of morphological and genetic divergence in isolated populations of everyone’s favourite Little Brown Skink™, Lampropholis coggeri. His fieldwork takes him all over the southern half of the Wet Tropics, where the skinks and Maxibons are plentiful. He will be notched.

Betsy Roznik is finishing up an experiment and writing her PhD thesis on the interactions between individual frog behaviour and the amphibian chytrid fungus. She has documented differences in the behaviour of infected and uninfected frogs in the field, and now she is conducting a lab experiment to determine whether these differences are a cause or consequence of infection.

John Llewelyn is studying adaptation to climate in a rainforest skink, Lampropholis coggeri. He is measuring a number of climate-relevant traits in this skink, such as thermal sensitivity and desiccation resistance, and is comparing these traits in skinks from different populations. John also continues his research on the interaction between native predators and cane toads, and was recently studying the effects of toad size and toad ontogeny on the feeding responses of common treesnakes.
Rebecca Webb and Lee Berger are busy trying to isolate new strains of Bd from north Queensland and Tasmania. Bec now fully appreciates how hard it is and that remembering to bring your ipod can make all the difference in regards to sanity.

Andrew Woodward has completed Bachelor of Animal Science project assessing sensitivity of Bd to antimicrobial agents, and modelling drug absorption by amphibian skin after topical antifungal treatment. He has now returned to Melbourne and working on the last few stages of the BVSc.

Sara Bell is writing up her PhD on cutaneous bacterial resistance to the amphibian chytrid fungus and preparing for her completion seminar in a few weeks time. She has found a cool negative relationship between the diversity of inhibitory bacteria and the intensity of chytrid infection.

David Pike is now lecturing at James Cook University, and continually juggles teaching responsibilities with a series of research projects investigating the evolution of lizard parental care, gecko behaviour, how climate change will impact sea turtles globally, and anything else he becomes interested in. David’s lab is growing quickly:

Lisa Stevenson (BSc Honours; co-supervised by Ross Alford) is doing world-first experiments incubating the amphibian chytrid fungus under realistic temperatures that frogs experience in the field. This will advance our understanding of why this pathogen has been so successful globally.

Joseph Mistretta (MSc; co-supervised by Lin Schwarzkopf) is working to understand how temperature influences personality in tropical rainbow skinks.

Linda Baker (MSc) is trying to understand whether we can predict rehabilitation success in sea turtles, using a 20-year dataset from Florida, USA.

Cassandra Denne (BSc) is modelling the impacts of a controlled harvest programme on green tree pythons to understand whether allowing limited harvest can help maintain genetic diversity in the pet trade and maintain wild populations.

Martha Brians (MSc) is quantifying the diet of juvenile green sea turtles to understand individual and population differences in light


Conrad Hoskin is now at JCU Townsville, on an ABRS Postdoctoral Fellowship for 3 years and then as on-going lecturer. Research he is currently doing includes: speciation and adaptation in general, hybrid zones (particularly in the Green-eyed Treefrog, *Litoria serrata*), diversity/biogeography/systematics of skinks (*Lampropholis, Liburnascincus* and some *Carlia*), geckos (*Oedura, Amalosia*, leaf-tails and some *Gehyra*) and frogs (microhylids and some *Litoria*). He is also assessing the invasion and impacts of the Asian House Gecko, and conducting surveys for endangered and missing rainforest frogs of Queensland (with Rob Puschendorf).
Booth Lab

At the School of Biological Sciences, The University of Queensland honours students have been working hard. Alice Carpentier is examining stable isotope signatures in mother eggs and hatchling sea turtles. Yvonne Loh is examining interaction of temperature and density on the growth of frog larvae. Katharine Robertson is investigating green turtle hatchling orientation and light pollution on Heron Island.

Carla Pereira is finishing up her PhD work on hatchling loggerhead and flatback sea turtles based at Mon Repos. Risma Maulani is finishing up her PhD thesis on emergence success and phenotype of hatchling Oliver Ridley turtles from the rookery in Alas Puro National Park, south-east Java.


Hero Lab

As always, the Hero Lab at Griffith on the Gold Coast are flat out like frogs drinking. Our research team is particularly busy, thanks to the team efforts of Dr Edward Narayan (Griffith Postdoctoral Fellow) and Dr Greg Lollback (Senior Research Fellow), with additional inputs from Professor Hamish McCallum & Dr Clare Morrison. We now have an awesome multidisciplinary team combining our skills to focus on global amphibian declines, ecology, disease and climate change.

Ed Narayan is leading a new research program in ecophysiology, and we are developing non-invasive techniques to sample hormones, using the Cane toad as our lab rat, and applying these skills to tackle some big questions in global amphibian declines. Greg Lollback is providing valuable support in GIS, R statistics, population ecology and acoustic-sensor sound analysis, and is an invaluable help for a wide range of field and lab projects. Hamish McCallum and Clare Morrison squeeze in some quality research time with us whenever they can. External Collaborators include: Dr David Newell (Southern Cross Uni), Mike Mahony (Newcastle University), David Chapple (Monash), Ed Meyer (freelance), Harry Hines (Qld NPRSR), Vance Vredenburg (University of San Francisco), Peter Narins (UCLA) and Phil Bishop (Otago University, New Zealand) …

Student projects are the key to success, with projects focussing on amphibians with a unique blend of climate change biology, ecophysiology, and population ecology as follows:

Danial Stratford’s PhD Project is predicting and assessing the risk of climate change on frogs in south-east Queensland. Dan submitted his thesis in May and started a job with CSIRO in Canberra the following week, but madly preparing papers while his thesis is under examination. Katrin Lowe is doing a PhD Project on Landscape ecology and bioclimatic conditions in frog communities in coastal wallum wetlands of eastern Australia, focussing on the wallum sedge frog (*Litoria olongburensis*), with implications for climate change. Mariel Familiar Lopez’ PhD Project is on the Distribution, ecology, disease and physiology of mountain top endemic frogs in the face of climate change: a study on *Philoria* sp. Christina Kindermann’s just started a PhD project on sexual selection in *Litoria wilcoxii*. Clay Simpkins has a MSc Project on abiotic and biotic factors influencing the assemblage of tadpoles and adult anurans in coastal wallum habitats of eastern Australia.

Lynette Plenderleith (enrolled at Monash with David Chapple), joined the lab with JMH as an external supervisor to a PhD Project on the introduction history and post invasion biology of the Bleating Tree Frog (*Litoria dentata*) on Lord Howe Island. Billy Ross is completing an honours Project on stress & disease along an altitudinal gradient within populations of the Great Barred Frog (*Mixophyes fasciolatus*) in south-east Queensland. Jon Shuker did an honours project in 2011 on abiotic and biotic factors associated with the distribution and abundance of the threatened wallum sedge frog, *Litoria olongburensis*, in mainland eastern Australia. Clara Graham’s 2011 honours Project 2011 looked at stress, chytridiomycosis and altitude in the Great-barred frog (*M. fasciolatus*).
Chris Dahl from Papua New Guinea has also been in the lab teaching us about PNG frogs and working with us on some collaborative projects. We look forward to continuing work with Chris on altitudinal gradients in New Guinea. Natalie Hill (and Saskia Lafebvre) are leading our Taudactylus captive breeding program at the Currambin Wildlife Sanctuary. Despite numerous setbacks following chytrid outbreaks in the frogbox, we have had 2 successful breeding events. Supervising a large team is keeping us busy, but the outputs are ramping up with publications pouring out of the lab (see list below), including 4 book chapters in the latest volume of Amphibian Biology.

In their spare time they are also working on long-term ecological research sites in Australia and Nepal (PPBio LTER project), and various research projects on flying reptiles (birds), bilbies, koalas and tigers, but that’s another story...

July 2012, has been busy preparing for 5 presentations for the World Congress of Herpetology (WCH) coming up in Vancouver. This will be a great meeting for all attendees and especially for JM Hero as he takes on the new role as Secretary General for the WCH.

And the frogging season is about to begin.


Biodiversity & Ecosystem Sciences, Qld Department of Science,

Clare Hourigan and Jesse Rowland have recently joined the team. Recent herpetofauna surveys at Barakula State Forest were very productive in terms of amphibian diversity with 17 species recorded from 32 sites. The high number of species captured shows the importance of the Cypress (Callitris glaucophylla) forest for native frog fauna, including several burrowing species such as Notaden bennettii and Neobatrachus sudellae. Results of the surveys are currently being analysed.

The Biodiversity & Ecosystem Sciences team (team leader T. Eyre) has secured funding (from the Biodiversity Fund and from the Australian Collaborative Range-lands Information System - ACRIS) for two monitoring projects that will aim to assess change in herpetofauna populations and species composition in response to management, on working grazing properties in the Mulga Lands (ACRIS) and the Brigalow Belt Bioregion (Biodiversity Fund).

The whole wildlife team in Biodiversity & Ecosystem Sciences at the Queensland Herbarium has contributed to compiling the first set of terrestrial vertebrate fauna survey guidelines for Queensland (Eyre et al. 2012), including information on many standardised herpetofauna survey techniques. These guidelines have been prepared for use by anyone in Queensland wishing to undertake systematic and standardised terrestrial vertebrate fauna surveys for inventory, monitoring and/or research purposes.

Over time, targeted survey approaches for threatened species listed under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 will also be developed and posted on the website to compliment or build upon those recommendations of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 listed species already provided by the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

So keep an eye on the website for the guidelines and new herpetofauna targeted species guidelines! You'll also find some useful field datasheets on the website, so check it out!  http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/ecosystems/biodiversity/assessing_biodiversity.html


Franklin ECOlab

Franklin lab has had many new additions to the lab including **Pippa Kern** (PhD candidate) working on physiological responses of anuran larvae to fluctuating thermal environments. **Beau Reilly** (PhD candidate) on the molecular mechanisms underlying resistance to atrophy in burrowing frogs. **Michel Ohmer** (PhD candidate) studying the role of skin sloughing in the development and progression of chytridiomycosis in frogs. **Nathan O’Donnell** (BSc Honours) looking at the effects of UV-B radiation on larval anuran immune system function. **Joe Fittell** (BSc Honours) on the control of skin sloughing in amphibians and **Ross Dwyer** (Endeavour Post-doctoral fellow) modelling large crocodile movements in complex riverine environments.

A variety of exciting projects are on-going in **Craig’s** lab, and despite his burgeoning admin commitments he is still finding time to get out into the field with his crocodile research on the Wenlock River. This has been a long-term research collaboration with Australia Zoo. Craig is currently involved in advancing the emerging field of conservation physiology. He is very fortunate to have a great group of research fellows and students who are all busy with their herp investigations. **Mariana Campbell** (Biology of hatchling Mary River turtles) is just about to submit her PhD for examination. The biggest achievement of her PhD was the attachment of the miniaturised transmitters to the carapace of the baby MRTs. She tracked them for several months and the results have been written up and submitted to the Journal of Applied Ecology. **Beau Reilly** has been conducting novel research on an Australian species of desert frog (the green-striped burrowing frog, *Cyclorana alboguttata*). Beau has recently developed a massive genomic resource for *C. alboguttata* by sequencing RNA from muscle tissue and going on to characterising its skeletal muscle transcriptome (i.e. transcribed elements of the frog’s genome telling us what genes are turned off and what are turned on during aestivation). He is currently analysing this data and has already detected over 500 differentially expressed genes. **Joe Fittell** has been looking at skin shedding in amphibians and has found that the sloughing event itself appears to be of no energetic expense to amphibians. He is currently looking at mechanisms to explain the degree of variability in sloughing periodicity between species. For her PhD, **Melissa Bruton** has successfully captured and radiotracked twelve adult woma pythons for approximately 12 months each near St George Qld, finishing May 2012. Melissa Bruton has been a bit of a media flirt this year with several articles on woma pythons: one about woma python-yakka skink associations in the ‘Land for Wildlife’ magazine distributed to Queensland Murray-Darling Basin Land for Wildlife members, one about the woma python radiotracking research in Australia Zoo’s ‘Crikey’ magazine, and one on woma radiotracking fieldwork in the Sunshine Coast Daily on the 18th September. **Rebecca Cramp** and **Ed Meyer** having been watching toads slough. They have shown that sloughing in toads is temperature dependant and that when toads slough they also lose a huge number of skin-associated microbes. They are currently looking into how this might affect disease progression in amphibians. They have recently had a paper on this topic provisionally accepted. **Rebecca** has also been looking at the molecular regulation of ion transporters in the gills of anuran larvae in response to low pH. She presented the findings of this research at the Society of Experimental Biology conference in Austria in July 2012.
Karen Young (the effects of aestivation temperature on muscle disuse atrophy in burrowing frogs) submitted her thesis for examination this year. She is currently working on revisions to her thesis and has had 1 paper published and two others provisionally accepted.

Melissa Bruton was successful in securing much needed grants from Australian Geographic, Waroo-Balonne Landcare, and Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors. Hamish Campbell, Ross Dwyer and Craig Franklin successfully secured National funding to develop a web-based animal tracking platform to support their ongoing crocodile research program and other animal movement studies.


Bernal MH, Alton LA, Cramp RL, Franklin CE (2011) Does simultaneous UV-B exposure enhance the lethal and sub-lethal effects of aquatic hypoxia on developing anuran embryos and larvae? Journal of Comparative Physiology B-Biochemical Systemic and Environmental Physiology 181:973-980

Alton LA, Wilson RS, Franklin CE (2011) A small increase in UV-B increases the susceptibility of tadpoles to predation. Proceedings of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences 278:2575-2583


South Australia

University of Adelaide
Kate Sanders and PhD student Kanishka Ukuwela have described two new sea snake species this year from northern Australia: Hydrophis donaldi is a highly distinctive taxon with no clear affinities to other viviparous sea snakes based on morphology and molecular data; Aipysurus mosaicus was previously recognised as A. eydouxii (which is widespread in Southeast Asia) but these were found to represent separate molecular lineages with clear morphological differences. These findings highlight the need for more detailed field surveys and taxonomic studies on Australia’s sea snakes. Kate’s Honours student Amy Watson is currently using the CT-scanning facility at Adelaide Microscopy to explore sea snake skulls in 3D. So far Amy has scanned and reconstructed models for more than 100 specimens, including specialists on spiny cat fishes, burrowing eels, and fish eggs. PhD student Matthew Taylor continues his molecular and morphological examination of the phylogenetic relationships of Australian pythons. He is currently examining the bioclimatic niche space of the group and conducting a kinematic study of the functional morphology of various python species.

Brett Goodman continues his work on the thermal physiology, functional morphology and energetics of burrowing and locomotion in limbed and limb-reduced lizards; so far he’s examined a good range of fossorial species, some pygopodids, and several species of Ctenotus. Some early results indicate that the cost of transport when burrowing through sand is considerably lower in limb-reduced than for limbed burrowing species.

Mike Tyler Lab
Michael Tyler In collaboration with a group at Flinders University, Mike has examined frog ilia from a cave on the border of WA with SA. These are the first frog fossils from the Nullarbor Plain and include numerous Neobatrachus and a new species of Litoria.

In January, Mike took a group to the Kimberley and later attended workshops at Innamincka in the north-east, and Milang on the River Murray. His consultancy work included the examination of abnormal frogs at the Roxby Downs mine site and, for AQIS, identified stowaway frogs amongst shipments of produce entering Australia from numerous countries.

To celebrate 50 years as an Honorary Associate at the Herpetology Department of the SA Museum, the Museum Board appointed Mike Curator Emeritus.

Kaya Klop-Toker, a BSc. (Hons) student, undertook a field study of Litoria in a remote part of the northern Flinders Ranges. A paper describing a new species is being prepared. Kaya is now a PhD student at the University of Newcastle.

The musculo-skeletal system of the Papuan frog, Barygenys maculata (Microhylidae): B. maculata is a burrowing frog that is never, according to local people, seen above ground. Its external morphology differs from “normal” (i.e. terrestrial) frogs in a number of ways, including, inter alia, body shape, limb position and length and eye size. Anatomical investigation has revealed a number of peculiarities concerning the limb musculature and studies are continuing.
In collaboration with colleagues, Mike published three books and two papers:


**South Australian Museum (SAM)**

Mike Lee is increasingly distracted by the Cambrian, but continues to offer moral support to the UofA herpos, and is investigating range-size evolution and limb reduction in *Lerista* and in Gymnophthalmids, the dinosaur-bird transition (again), as well as the true identity of the earliest alleged fossil lizards.

Adam Skinner has started a postdoc working with Nicholas Cole and Mike Lee on the developmental genetics of evolutionary limb reduction in sand-swimming skinks (*Lerista*). At the moment, he is using next-generation sequencing technology to compare gene expression patterns across species with different limb phenotypes.

Steve Donnellan is working with several collaborators on Varanid systematic projects and on blindsnake systematics with Nicholas Vidal, Julie Marin and Julie Sassi at the French National Museum, Blair Hedges at Penn State and Paul Doughty at the WAM. Work continues on Australian and Melanesian frog taxonomy with Paul Doughty (WAM) and Steve Richards (NTM) and Mike Mahony (Newcastle). A new project with Scott Keogh and Craig Moritz and various collaborators from WA has begun on herp biodiversity values in the Pilbara and Kimberley. Steve has joined Scott Keogh, Conrad Hoskin and Dan Rabosky on a huge project to develop a phylogeny for all the Australian frogs species based on 100’s of genes. He can’t wait to play with the tree and sort out some persistent issues in the evolutionary history of our frog fauna. Steve is also working with Mike Gardner and Sarah Pearson from Flinders Uni and Paul Doughty and Zoe Hamilton to sort out some systematic and population genetic problems in rock-dwelling *Egernias*. Matt deBoo is two-thirds the way through his PhD project on the genetic population structure and mating system of green and golden bellfrogs at the Sydney Olympic Park. Matt is contributing to the development of a population model for this endangered species in collaboration with the bell frog team from Newcastle University.
Mark Hutchinson is currently involved in several things. Beginning with systematics work, Mark Sistrom’s PhD work on *Gehyra* is being written up with four papers published or submitted. This will result in a revision of some *Gehyra* species groups. Still some gecko work continuing in collaboration with Paul Oliver and Paul Doughty, with more diplodactylid species to be dealt with soon, and maybe a pygopod or two, and also with Steve Donnellan and Dan Rabosky on *Ctenotus*. Of an evolution and palaeo nature, the last 18 months has seem Mark, along with Mike Lee and Adam Skinner, delve into some of the early supposed agamid and lizard fossils, in order to get a better handle on exactly what an “acrodont” is, with some lizard molecular clock calibration points needing to be revisited as a result (Hutchinson et al 2012). A single skull bone has resulted in description of an extinct and rather big “cave shingleback” relative from Wellington Caves (Cernansky & Hutchinson 2012) and New Pleistocene lizards from the Nullarbor Plain and the Naracoorte Caves are pushing him into more detailed studies of lizard bones. Mark is interested in going further to find out more about how they develop, with a first go collaborating with some partners in Zurich on skinks (Hugi et al 2012), and a pilot study beginning this year with Vera Weisbecker at UQ on embryological development of the gecko skeleton – any hopeful honours students wanting a cool herp evo-devo project should get in touch with Vera (www.weisbeckerlab.com.au). As for distribution, conservation, and natural history, many thanks to Karl Brennan’s (WA DEC) organisational efforts and Terry Morley (Adelaide Zoo), have provided a chance to drop in and play with the zoo’s two western desert taipans (*O. temporalis*) and contribute to the expanded description Karl coordinated (Brennan et al. 2012). Pygmy bluetongues are expanding, with range extensions south to Kapunda and north to beyond Jamestown, and a first permanent sanctuary established through the SA Nature Foundation. Deb Bower’s broad-shelled turtle stuff is coming out too (Bower et al. 2012), with a bit more info on this iconic Murray Darling beast and the threats posed by low water flows.


Cernansky, A. & Hutchinson, M. N. A new large fossil species of *Tiliqua* (Squamata; Scincidae) from the Pliocene of the Wellington Caves (New South Wales, Australia) *Alcheringa* (accepted August 2012).


Flinders University

Mike Bull has been leading the team focusing on sleepy lizards and pygmy bluetongue lizards and also started new project on Slaters skinks in the Alice Springs, NT in collaboration with Chris Pavey and Mark Hutchinson. The sleepy lizard project is concentrating on behaviour syndromes and social networks among the lizards living in an area, and how that influences the transmission of parasites. The pygmy bluetongue project continues with new insights into social interactions and the impact of grazing (by sheep) on lizard behaviour and conservation strategies including photographic identification of individuals, movement of individuals through the population and the feasibility of translocation and relocation of this species. The slaters skink project will focus on the conservation of this species and the development of artificial refuges, with an aim to use this information in restoration and potential relocation projects in the future.
Stephan Leu has recently re-joined Mike Bull’s lizard lab to pursue his interest in social behaviour and social networks. He is currently investigating social network structure in relation to lizard personalities. Previously he has been working with Mike Mahony at the University of Newcastle on the conservation and behaviour of amphibians. Jess Clayton is new to the lab, commencing her PhD in February 2012. Her research will contribute to the pygmy bluetongue project, with a focus on population dynamics of the lycosid (wolf) and mygalomorph (trapdoor) spiders associated with pygmy bluetongues and the impact of sheep grazing regime on spider burrow construction. After one field season of her PhD Claire Treilbs has discovered that all you need for tracking Slater’s skink is a camera (preferably one with a zoom lens). Using the skinks’ unique facial markings, she’s developed a key to identify the individuals within a study population. Some interesting patterns in social grouping, burrow occupancy and tenure are starting to emerge.

Aaron Fenner has returned to working on pygmy bluetongue lizards after dabbling in Slater’s skink ecology and sleepy lizard social networks. This year Aaron will be focussing on social networks and parasite/bacteria transmission networks in pygmy bluetongues, as well as a project looking at improving the design of artificial burrows for translocation/relocation programs. He also plans to continue to dabble in Slater’s skinks with a trip planned to try and relocate the SA sub species, and sleepy lizard behaviour.

Julie Schofield is in the final year of her PhD and is using microsatellites and mitochondrial sequences to investigate the level of movement within and between populations and to investigate mating and parentage of the Pygmy Bluetongue lizard (Tiliqua adelaidensis). Stephanie Godfrey after many years of service in the Bull lab has moved over to Murdoch University after obtaining a DECRA, to continue her work with social networks and parasite transmission. Sadly Steph has chosen to work with mammals (bettongs), so may be lost in the wilderness for a few years but hopefully she will be back to reptiles in no time.

Leili Shamimi is continuing her PhD on photographic identification of pygmy bluetongue lizards. Caroline Wohlfeil is continuing her PhD on social networks and parasite transmission. Mehregan Ebrahimi continues his PhD work on the best way to perform translocations of pygmy bluetongue lizards. Torbin Nielsen will be joining the Bull lab to begin his PhD investigating grazing pressures on pygmy bluetongue lizards and training a sniffer dog to see if they can be used as effective lizard finders. Dale Burzacott continues as Mike Bull’s research assistant and lab coordinator.


Adelaide Zoo
Grant Husband from Territory Wildlife Park, NT, joined the Reptile Team in the middle of 2012.

Notable Breedings this year: Western Swamp Tortoise *Pseudemydura umbrina*. We are the only institution to hold the species other than Perth Zoo. Although we have had breeding potential for a while, this was the first occasion we managed to breed. Two eggs hatched, but unfortunately the first neonate died in the first week. The second hatching is doing well.

Broad-headed Snake *Hoplocephalus bungaroides*. One of our females produced seven living young and a number of stillborns. Six of the young are still doing well, albeit having to be force fed. The second female had been having birthing problems, and a caesarean was performed. Unfortunately all young were dead inside, and the female passed away within 24 hours of the operation.
The two Western Deserts Taipans *Oxyuranus temporalis* are doing well. They have been in captivity now for almost two years. They have been together, but to date we have seen no mating behaviours. The snakes have been milked on a number of occasions to provide venom for research into properties of the venom of this species. Results of this research are currently being written up by a number of researchers from Venom Supplies, Monash University, University of South Australia and Adelaide Zoo.

**Publications**


Tasmania
University of Tasmania
Behavioural and Evolutionary Ecology Research Group

Herp research in Tassie is just beginning to ramp up as the lizards (and people) start returning/emerging after the cold winter. In preparation for the oncoming spring and summer Geoff and Mandy have returned from the northern hemisphere and several new faces have joined both the Behavioural and Evolutionary Ecology Research group and the Comparative Endocrinology and Ecophysiology Group.

Erik Wapstra is continuing his work on the snow skink (*Niveoscincus ocellatus*) system, and is preparing to begin his 13th field season on this system. Erik was awarded a Future Fellowship from the ARC last year and is looking forward to dedicating his time to expand the system in several new directions. One of these includes collaboration with Yoichi Matsuda from Nagoya University in Japan, which will allow Erik to explore the mechanistic basis behind the observed population divergence in sex determining systems within Erik’s snow skinks. Erik also found time to return to Sweden this year and continue his long-running collaboration with Professor Mats Olsson from the University of Sydney, and this collaboration has extended to include work on the influence of metabolic processes on life history evolution in snow skinks and agamids.

Geoff While has spent the majority of the last 12 months at the University of Oxford working with Tobias Uller on a Marie-Curie post-doc examining context dependent sexual selection and colonization dynamics in the invasive wall lizard. As part of this project, Geoff and Tobias had the arduous task of collecting lizards in southern France (in collaboration with Fabien Aubert at CRNS) and Northern Italy (in collaboration with Roberto Sacci and Marco Zuffi from the Universities of Pavia and Pisa respectively). Geoff recently returned to Tasmania where he will continue his Egernia whitii project examining the interplay of environmental heterogeneity and behaviour in shaping social dynamics as well as collaborating with Erik on his snow skink system. Geoff will continue to spend considerable time in the UK to finish the wall lizard project (and hopefully spend some more time under the Tuscan sun…).

Jo McEvoy is close to finishing her PhD work on the Egernia system. Jo has been examining behavioural phenotypes (personality) within a natural population of *Egernia whitii*, and considering the role that hormones play in shaping individual behavioural differences, as well as the outcomes of those differences at the population level. Jo has finished the majority of her field and laboratory work and is now concentrating on putting it all together.

Mandy Caldwell has recently completed her final field season looking at the potential for thermophysiological plasticity to buffer changes in the thermal environment in alpine and lowland snow skinks. She is currently collaborating with Professor Peter Frappell to analyse the results from this component of her project. Mandy’s overall PhD project will examine the potential for behavioural, physiological, and ecological traits to buffer climate impacts in snow skinks. She is currently using data she has generated in the field and laboratory to parameterise a mechanistic model, in collaboration with Mike Kearney from University of Melbourne, in order to determine
The implications of climate change for snow skink population dynamics and persistence.

The BEER group has also seen a number of honours students carry out herp related projects over the past 12 months. **Jodie Gruber** worked with Erik on a project examining context dependent sex allocation in the spotted snow skink. Jodie recently completed her project and is currently contemplating the direction she wants to go for her PhD. **Hannah Cliff** is a current honours student (co-supervised with **Chris Burridge**), who spent the autumn catching spotted snow skinks throughout Tasmania in order to map their phylogeography. Finally, **Amber Demir** is working with Erik, Geoff and Jo on the *Egernia* system. She is examining parental recognition of offspring as well as looking at characterizing their pheromones to examine the potential mechanism by which recognition may occur. Both Hannah and Amber are currently finishing off their field and laboratory work.

We have had two Postgraduate completions over the last 12 months. Firstly, **Chloe Cadby** finished up her thesis on climate change and maternal effects in *Niveoscincus ocellatus*. Chloe has worked in collaboration with Erik, Geoff, Tobias and **Alistair Hobday** to examine how mothers may buffer the impacts of environmental change to their offspring and specifically how climate at multiple scales influences key phenotypic and phenological traits. Since completing her PhD Chloe has been working as a data analyst for the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Science at UTAS. She has also found time to have a second baby girl, Ayla, born in March this year. We also said good bye to **Mat Russel** who finished off his masters project in January. His project has examined sperm storage in *N. ocellatus*. Mat returned to his homeland in Canada and is currently looking for a project which will allow him to integrate the skills he acquired during his masters project with captive conservation projects.

The other area of herpetological research at the University of Tasmania is the **Comparative Endocrinology and Ecophysiology Group**. **Sue Jones** has returned from her role in the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Discipline Scholar for Science. Sue has also stepped down from Head of School duties which will give her plenty of time to continue her work examining the evolution of viviparity in vertebrates and how environmental stressors affect the endocrine (hormone) system. In addition Sue works with members of the BEER (Jo McEvoy) on their projects providing expert advice and support on the physiological basis of key behavioural traits.

**Ashley Edwards** is continuing her long term project examining key components of the reproductive physiology of the blue tongue lizard (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*). Ashley’s work includes a number of key areas including characterisation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal (HPG) axis and examining the key physiological steps by which ectothermic vertebrates living in cold climates assess their capacity to breed.

**Yuni Eswaryanti** has been hard at work on her project with Sue, Erik and **Peter Frappell** examining the physiological flexibility of an endemic Tasmanian species, spotted skink *Niveoscincus ocellatus* inhabiting different climatic regions. Her project is focusing on body temperature, metabolic rate, performance traits and the field energy expenditure.
Laura Parsley continues her PhD work with Sue and Erik on the endocrinology of reptilian gestation and specifically how embryonic hormone exposure may be modulated and the potential for endocrine disruption in *Niveoscincus metallicus*. Laura has finished field and experimental work for this project as well as her histology, hormone and chemical analyses and is now concentrating on analyzing her data and writing up her project.

Since handing in his PhD thesis last year, Keisuke Itonaga returned to Japan and has recently been offered a research position at Japan’s Yokohama University.


Western Australia

University of Western Australia, School of animal biology

Roberts lab - current & visiting students: **Aimee Silla** studies development and application of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) for the conservation of anuran amphibians, Ph D has just been submitted! **Jen Francis** is writing up her work on stable isotopes, food webs and tadpole community structure in Kimberly frogs. **Jane Reniers, Wim Verlinden**, Laboratory of Aquatic Ecology, Evolution and Conservation, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium are both working on variation in life history features across climate gradients working in WA on *Crinia pseudinsignifera* in pools on granite outcrops. Their research group in Belgium has a similar focus but works primarily with aquatic invertebrates. Jane is a Ph D student looking at variation in clutch attributes, acoustics cues to pond location and now knows how hard it is (=impossible) to rear *C. pseudinsignifera* tadpoles under controlled conditions! Wim has just finished a Masters degree analysing spatial variation life history traits in *C. pseudinsignifera* and *Rana temporaria*: with an emphasis on variation in egg size and number and age and growth patterns.

**Dale Roberts**: drifting in to plant genetics – they are green like some frogs but they are active in daylight and don’t move when you chase them (ARC Linkage grant) – maybe there are things easier than frogs to work on! With Michael Rix (WA Museum, he works on spiders but did his Ph D with me), Dan Edwards (currently at Yale) and several others: working up a review of biogeography of south-western Australia to compete rigorously with Steve Hopper’s models of plant speciation Planning more work on sperm competition (with Leigh Simmons) and sexual conflict.


Nicki Mitchell

Nicki Mitchell’s research group has several new additions. Jamie Tedeschi - a turtle botherer from Arizona - started her PhD last year and is busy developing her project on the evolvability of heat sensitive genes in loggerhead and flatback turtles - partly funded by Chevron’s environmental offset for the Gorgon gas development. Other herpy PhD students Sophie Arnall and Hasnein Tareque are delving deep into dynamic energy budget theory and ecohydrological modelling respectively, in their efforts to model future habitats of the Critically Endangered Western Swamp Tortoise. New honours student Marie Dale is grounding this ARC Linkage project in reality and is using Multiple Criteria Decision Analysis to refine selection of sites for assisted colonisations. Another new honours student Jessica Stubbs has just commenced her research on delineating the thermosensitive period for sex determination in flatback turtles, while Lorian Woolgar has returned to further develop her honours project on spatial modelling of the sex ratios of loggerhead turtle into an MSc project. Over the Tasman, Anna Carter (Victoria University of Wellington) is working on high resolution sex ratio modelling of populations of tuatara on Little Barrier and Stephens Islands. Sadly, there are no students working on frogs at the moment, but former honours student Angela Eads published her work on desiccation tolerance in Psedophryne toadlets in Evolution before moving on to a PhD on mussels.

Nicki herself is trying to stay afloat under the weight of almost 900 first year biology students, but manages to get in the field occasionally for research on nesting marine turtles. Sadly much of the work has been in vain as cyclones have taken out two study sites in two years, but third time lucky...


Other “herpy” Ph D’s that I know about at UWA

Nic NAGLOO: The sensory ecology of Australia reptiles, working with Nathan Hart & Shaun Collin in the Neuroecology group. I will get Nick to ASH next year!

Esther LEVY: The impact of land clearing on patterns of population genetic structure, genetic variation and parasite abundance in the ornate dragon lizard, Ctenophorus ornatus, supervised by Natasha LeBas, Jason Kennington and Joe Tompkins. Submitted early 2012.

Georgina YEATMAN, Habitat utilisation by terrestrial vertebrates in the jarrah forest: investigation into spatial patterns of distribution and abundance at landscape and regional scales, supervised by Harriet Mills and Adrian Wayne (DEC). She does catch herps!!!

Perth Zoo

Helen Robertson has retired and her role as Director of Animal Health and Research has been taken over by Peter Mawson (previously with Department of Environment & Conservation). For a quick summary of Peter’s roles – see (http://www.cbsmwa.org.au/program/keynotes/dr-peter-mawson). Perth Zoo continues its role in captive breeding of western swamp tortoises and several frog species.

Kay Bradfield is supervising the Native Species Breeding Program (NSBP) at Perth Zoo focuses on breeding threatened species native to Western Australia for release to the wild. The NSBP has been working with four herp species over the last 12 months: Western Swamp Tortoises (Pseudemydura umbrina; Critically Endangered), White-bellied Frogs (Geocrinia alba; Critically Endangered), Orange-bellied Frogs (G. vitellina; Vulnerable), and Sunset Frogs (Spicospina flammocaerulea; Vulnerable). All of these programs are conducted in partnership with the WA Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), and the South-west Catchments Council provides financial support to the Geocrinia program. Western Swamp Tortoises aestivate over summer as this is the dry season in south-west WA, so releases are conducted when the swamps are full of water in winter. In 2011, 63 tortoises were released to two sites near Perth in July and August, bringing the total number of tortoises bred at the zoo and subsequently released to the wild to 570.

The Zoo’s Geocrinia conservation program incorporates both head-starting (i.e. collecting eggs from the wild and rearing them at the Zoo for 12 months prior to release) and captive breeding.

White-bellied and Orange-bellied Frogs were released at sites near Margaret River in the state’s south-west in October 2011. This was the first release of head-started Orange-bellied Frogs to the wild (n=7), and the second release of head-started White-bellied Frogs (n=31). Based on monitoring of the White-bellied Frog release site conducted by the DEC in spring 2011, it is estimated that more than two-thirds of the 70 frogs released in 2010 survived their first 12 months in the wild, so the 2011 cohort was released at the same site. White-bellied Frogs were also bred in captivity for the first time by Perth Zoo in spring 2011, and these individuals will be released along with head-started individuals this coming spring.

Sunset Frogs were bred in captivity for the first time by the Zoo in spring 2011, and 30 adults and 251 tadpoles were released to a site near Walpole on the south coast
in December 2011. The release was a conservation introduction (i.e. they were released at a site outside their geographical range). The aim was to expand the species range into a third catchment area, as this will mean the species is less vulnerable to disasters that affect entire catchments or longer-term changes in climate. Early signs are promising, and on-going monitoring of the release site will be undertaken by the DEC.

**WA Museum**

The taxonomy of Western Australia continues to be progressed from the Herp section, with recent papers on frog hotspots, lost geckos, spiny skinks and even a treatment of Pilbara herptile communities in the last 18 months (see list). Again the message seems to be: Pilbara and Kimberley herps rock! Field trips to interesting places (especially the Kimberley) and visitors coming to work on the collections have been the fun, outward focussed parts of the department. Last year Paul Doughty was at the NHM in London photographing types (yes, you can bug him if you need anything) and also did a 3 month stay in Aaron Bauer’s lab at Villanova University in Philadelphia, U.S.A. as part of a Churchill Fellowship. Sadly, departures do happen, so Brad Maryan and Tom Parkin left their collection management positions to both ‘get outdoors more’. Also, Ric How is retiring after 35 years of distinguished service at WAM, a truly class act who we will miss dearly. One new arrival will be Gaynor Dolman later in 2012, who will be our new molecular lab boss. Gaynor won’t be doing just herps, but we know where her heart is!


Edith Cowan University
Rob Davis: Wildlife Lab

Master's student Marcus Cosentino has commenced his research on South-west Carpet Pythons. Marcus is using them as a model to determine the feasibility of re-introducing captive-bred threatened snakes to the wild. He'll be examining physiological and behavioural responses in wild versus captive individuals. David Pearson has provided invaluable advice and guidance.

Honours student Joe Krawiec completed a first class honours project working with ECU and Siegy Krauss in the Kings Park genetics lab, examining the impacts of urbanization on the genetic structuring of Ctenotus fallens. Joe found little in the way of subdivision between urban populations, suggesting that time since isolation is too recent to manifest in gene flow. A manuscript is in prep, and this was presented at ESA in Hobart.

Our lab program monitoring the impacts of fire on reptiles in Kings Park has now completed 3 years of spring and autumn trapping and some distinct trends are emerging. This was recently presented at a fire symposium and a publication is expected after 5 years of trapping.

Rob Davis continues to try and encourage more herp students into the lab and is still working with Dale on frog papers. He is making the most of study leave for the rest of the year to collaborate with Dale and Anssi Laurilla (Uppsala, Sweden) on more frog papers.
Victoria

University of Melbourne

Tracy Lab
After nearly a decade in Darwin that left him a naturalised Territorian, Chris Tracy moved in mid 2011 to the University of Melbourne. He’s continuing his work on physiological ecology of frogs, with a bit more of a Victorian flavour, although he still has his fingers on the fauna of the NT. The "lab group" (Chris) is awaiting the arrival of a new PhD student, Elia Pirtle, coming from the Mojave desert of Nevada to study and model the potential susceptibility of various N. American and Australian desert lizards to climate change with Chris and Michael Kearney. After spending the winter in Victoria, where it is entirely too cold for a naturalised Territorian herper, Chris was offered a tenure-track position at California State University Fullerton, in sunny Los Angeles and comfortably close to his old stomping grounds in the Mojave desert, where it is plenty warm. He’ll be starting in early 2013, but sees a lot more Australian herpetology in his near future.

Quantitative and Applied Ecology Group
Our mission is almost complete. Small pockets of resistance remain, but we have now almost rid the School of Botany of all plant fanciers. Their remaining forces will be crushed within weeks. The School of Botany will be no more. In its place will rise an esteemed and formidable School of Herpetology!

Our spiritual leader, Dr Kirsten Parris (‘la Cabecilla’) remains dedicated to urban frogs despite significant tactical responsibilities. Kirsten’s recent work covers habitat and landscape drivers of reproductive success for urban amphibians, and re-introduction programs for threatened and non-threatened taxa (both with associate-at-arms Dr Andrew Hamer). Comrade Dr Geoff Heard (‘el Che’) is leading extra-curricular raids on developers, who seem hell bent on destroying Growling Grass Frog populations across Melbourne. His weapon? A metapopulation model, known amongst quaking developers as ‘The Truth Finder’. Comrade Dr Reid Tingley (‘Brave Heart’) has joined the cause after a recent defection across the border. Brave Heart’s multiple skills are matched by his passion for herpetological dominance. Australia’s invasive amphibians will feel his wrath as soon as the overthrow is complete. Lieutenants Claire Keely (‘Little Castro’) and Stefano Canessa (‘Maximus’) are currently massing forces in Canada. We are confident they will return from the World Congress with battalions a hundred strong, having inspired them with the quality of their respective research on Growling Grass Frog conservation genetics and chytrid detection in Yellow Bellied Toads. Lieutenant Matt West (‘Xanana’) trains regularly in the deep forests of central Victoria, honing his guerrilla tactics on Spotted Tree Frogs and unsuspecting trout fisherman. His fitness is unsurpassed; his movements untraceable; his attack unrelenting. He is the ghost of the forest.

Our final assault will take them by surprise. They will throw down their tomato stakes and quadrats, and renounce all botanical inclinations. We will be merciful. But they must swear allegiance to our cause. Herpetologist or heathen? They must decide.


Reports

Media/Popular articles
S. Canessa:
• Trying to reverse the decline of the Apennine yellow-bellied toad in Northern Italy. FrogLog 101, March 2012, IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group.

C. Keely:
• ‘Call to spot ribbit outbreaks to help health of waterways’, Herald Sun (5/3/2012).

G. Heard:
• ‘Urban spread poses new threat to endangered frogs’, The Age (28/6/2012).
• ‘Merri Creek frogs’ future looks grim’, Preston Leader (8/5/2012).

K. Parris:
• ‘No hollow victory’, The Age (7/8/2012).
• ‘Urban songbirds change their tune’, The Age (6/1/2011).
• ‘City birds do it differently’, PM program, ABC Radio National (5/1/2011).

R. Tingley:
• Alien amphibians challenge Darwin’s naturalization hypothesis, FrogLog 95, March 2011, IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group.
• ‘Frogs at home with relatives’, Nature (16/02/2011).

Recent Funding/Awards
S. Canessa:
• SSAR International Grant in Herpetology 2012

C. Keely:
• ASH Student Travel Grant, ASH Conference 2011, Paluma.
• Museum Victoria 1854 Scholarship.

R. Tingley:
• Runner-up for Best Presentation, ASH Conference 2011, Paluma.
La Trobe University: Peters Lab
The Animal Behaviour Group in the Department of Zoology at La Trobe University, headed by Richard Peters, is building and continues to have a strong research focus on lizard communication. Katy Weller has just completed an honours project on the influence of high predation threat on signalling strategies in Jacky lizards (*Amphibolurus muricatus*), while Jose Ramos has recently commenced a PhD in the group. Jose will investigate the influence of habitat characteristics on display structure of a number of agamid lizards. For more information please visit our website: http://richard.eriophora.com.au

Monash University
Chapple Lab
David is continuing his research in four main areas: i) the invasion dynamics of the delicate skink (*Lamproholis delicata*), ii) ecology, evolution and invasion biology of the Lord Howe Island herpetofauna, iii) biogeography and evolutionary ecology of New Zealand reptiles, and iv) population genetics and climatic adaptation in alpine *Liopholis* skinks. His research group continues to grow and now studies a variety of lizard and frog species in eastern Australia and throughout the Pacific region.

Katie Smith, fresh from completing her PhD at Museum Victoria/University of Melbourne with Jane Melville, is now a research assistant in the Chapple Lab. She is working on a wide range of molecular projects. Rebecca Bray continues her PhD project on the lizards of Lord Howe Island. She has recently had the opportunity to complete the first lizard surveys on several offshore islands within the Lord Howe Island group (including Balls Pyramid). Kate Waller, a third-year student, has been helping Bec with her molecular work on the LHI skink and LHI gecko. Lynette Plenderleith, now based in Brisbane in Jean-Marc Hero’s lab, continues her PhD research on the ecology and invasion biology of the bleating tree frog (*Litoria dentata*) on Lord Howe Island. Celine Goulet has recently arrived from the US to commence her PhD project on climatic adaptation in *Lamproholis* skinks.

In July, Kirilee Chaplin started her honours project on post-introduction evolution and genetic admixture in invasive populations of the delicate skink. This research has been assisted by a third-year student, Hannah Moule. Louise Barnett recently completed her honours project investigating whether LHI skinks can detect and respond to the scent of invasive black rats on Lord Howe Island. She is planning to start a PhD project at JCU in 2013 with Ben Phillips and Conrad Hoskin. Gillian Cromie finished her honours project in 2011, examining the impact of tail loss on the behaviour of *Lamproholis delicata* and *L. guichenoti*.

Böhm M, ..Chapple DG...& 240 other authors. The conservation status of the world's reptiles. *Biological Conservation*, in press.


**Museum Victoria**

**Jane Melville** has returned from maternity leave and is continuing her Burnt Frog research project on the effect of the 2009 fires on the frog fauna around Kinglake, Victoria. A Project officer, *Dominique Potvin*, and Research assistant, *Rohan Long*, have just started work on this project. They will be undertaking field work, population genetics and analysing frog call data to look at the impacts on the fires on frog communities. Jane is continuing to work on publication of phylogeography work on agamid lizards and associated taxonomic revisions. And she is currently organising DeAgamis3 – the 3rd International Symposium on Agamid Lizards, which will be held at Museum Victoria in January 2013.
Jo Sumner is managing the DNA lab, facilitating the push into next generation sequencing projects and continuing her research on phylogeography and populations genetics of water skins, the phylogeography of Ctenophorus nuchalis and upcoming work on alpine lizards with Dave Chapple at Monash Uni.

Jane and Jo are organising the herpetology sections of upcoming Museum Victoria/ Parks Victoria “Bioscans” in the Grampians and Victorian alpine regions. Jane’s student, Katie Smith has been awarded her PhD on hybrid zones in south-eastern Australian tree frogs and is now working as a research Associate on projects with Jane and Paul Oliver. She finally got her honours paper through the Evolution review process. Only took 3 years. Luckily her PhD papers have been faster coming.

Josh Hale was also awarded his PhD and is now working as a freshwater ecologist at an Environmental Assessment company (SKM).

Maggie Haines is untangling the web of intrigue that is the genus Pseudemoia for her PhD. These little brown skinks are notoriously hard to identify, complicated by there being a couple of cryptic species and some hybridisation going on. She’s amassed quite a collection of grants, most recently an ABRS travel award and Holsworth Wildlife Research grant. Claire Keely is continuing her PhD on the conservation genetics of the Growling Grass Frog around Melbourne and recently received the Museum Victoria 1854 Scholarship. She picked up the most impressive unidentifiable skin ailment whilst in Borneo recently.
Claire McLean is continuing her PhD on colour variation and genetic divergence within and among populations of the tawny dragon. She is funding her work with successful grants including a Holsworth Wildlife Research Grant, Nature Foundation SA Scholarship Grant, and the Melbourne Uni Drummond Award.

Pete Smissen completed his MSc on phylogeography of lace monitors, he received grants from the Holsworth Wildlife Research Grant and the Linnaean Society of NSW for this work. He is now doing a PhD on something furry.

Rebecca Laver is fresh from her Master’s work on Komodo dragons with Tim Jessop at Melbourne Uni and has just started her PhD with Jane M, Tim J and Paul Oliver on phylogeographic patterns of Oedura and Strophurus geckos up in the top end. Awesome field work involved.
Northern Territory

No one from the Northern Territory reported this year but fortunately your trusty editor is adept at stalking and can thus inform of some things top end. My dear friend Carla Eisenberg recently moved to the north to unite in holy matrimony with a frog turned crocodile man at Charles Darwin University - Steve Reynolds. Now they spend their time making cute mating calls at each other and drinking gin. I also spied Keith Christian at the wedding and whilst he refused to partake in albatross like dance patterns, he did engage in an in depth conversation on the theory of basking in frogs, ever the physiologist. Stalkbook tells me that long time herpetologist Dane Trembath has recently started working at EcOz Environmental Consultants in Darwin as an environmental consultant and I ran into Steve Richards on the road between El Questro Station and Kununurra in April this year and saw him in the flesh (Tick!). I mentioned the necessity to attend ASH and experience the wonder of the Glenn Shea dance manoeuvre, in order to secure a title of “professional herpetologist”.

New South Wales

University of Sydney
Thompson Lab

James van Dyke, better known as Van, joined the lab in June on his own NSF Fellowship for two years to study nutrient transport across the placenta of skinks. Van completed his PhD in 2011 on reproduction in reptiles, with a focus on resource allocation, which he did with Steve Beaupre at the University of Arkansas. Van came from a postdoc position at Virginia Tech where he was studying turtles and pollution, and has quickly become an integral part of the lab. Oliver Griffith completed his honours project on molecular aspects of the evolution of complex placentae in lizards and has now begun a PhD that extends the honours work. Jess McGlashan is doing a PhD on turtles eggs with Ricky Spencer at the University of Western Sydney, but is co-supervised by Mike Thompson and by Fred Janzen at Iowa State. Our new reptilian honours student, Jess McKenna has just begun her project on Mike’s new ARC grant to study the distribution and function of the angiogenic growth factor, VEGF_{111} in Saiphos equalis, which Bridget Murphy discovered recently.

Our other honours student, Melanie Laird is actually studying the uterus of marsupial dunnarts, but the work stems from earlier research in the lab on lizards and questions associated with the evolution of viviparity in vertebrates. Robin Andrews, from Virginia Tech, well known to many people who study the evolution of viviparity, lizard eggs or Anolis, spent last summer in the lab studying eggs of Australian geckos.

Oliver Griffith completed his honours project on molecular aspects of the evolution of complex placentae in lizards and has now begun a PhD that extends the honours
work.

**Graduations:** In the last year, Bridget Murphy and Scott van Barneveld graduated their PhDs, Oliver Griffith graduated his honours and Jess McKenna graduated her Bachelors degrees. Bridget has now taken a career in science communication, Scott is currently an environmental consultant in Brisbane, Oli has started his PhD and Jess has started honours. ‘= 

**Matt Brandley** published a very significant study – the first transcriptomic analysis of the uterus of a viviparous African skink, a species for which there is no genome and only the third or fourth transcriptomic study of any reptile tissue published to date. Matt and Oli are really on the cutting edge, having now sequenced placental transcriptomes of four Australian skinks in efforts to understand 1. the evolution of viviparity from oviparity, and 2. the evolution of placentotrophy from lecithotrophy. The problem now is analysing the tens of millions of data points. Stay tuned! **Shervin Aslanzadeh** and **Nadav Pezaro** are both still writing their PhD theses.

**Jacquie Herbert** continues to work two days a week in the lab, but still manages to be at the centre of managing most things. **Bec (Rebecca) Bray**, who is doing a PhD at Monash with **David Chapple**, co-supervised by Mike, has spent a LOT of time on Lord Howe Island in the last year discovering wonderful things about the lizards of the island group. Other (non-herp) students, **Phoebe Hill** and **Sam Clayman**, who worked on viviparity in sharks and physiology of marine molluscs, have graduated their PhD, and **Fran van den Berg**, is doing some great work on flat rock spiders.

**Mike**, together with **Chris Murphy** and **Georges Grau**, received a new ARC Discovery grant to study the potential cancer tumour-supporting molecule, VEGF_{111} in the uterus of lizards, part of which is **Jess McKenna**’s honours project. **Mike** was very grumpy at missing the last ASH meeting due to administrative duties at the University, but the lab was well represented. **Mike** and **Fran** both presented papers at the Australian and New Zealand Society for Comparative Physiology and Biochemistry, **University of Tasmania** in December 2011.

We are expecting a great 7th **World Congress of Herpetology** in Vancouver, and most of the present, and some past lab members, will be there.


Chapple, D.G., K.A. Miller, F. Kraus & M.B. Thompson. 2012. Divergent introduction histories among invasive populations of the delicate skink (*Lampropelosis delicata*): has the importance of genetic admixture in the success of biological invasions been overemphasized? Diversity and Distributions (Published on-line 21 May, 2012).


**Shine Lab**

Things have been roaring along in Rick Shine’s research group. Several people have left, either with new Ph D diplomas in their pockets, or (in the case of the post-docs) to new and exciting jobs. Some new people have arrived, and we are starting several new projects (and thus, looking for some new students, etc.). So, please contact Rick if you have a passionate desire to do your Honours or Ph D on evolutionary or ecological questions, especially if you are attracted to the idea of using the much-beloved cane toad as your model species. We are planning a major program using toads as the model system to explore rapid evolutionary change (at both genetic and phenotypic levels), field-based immunobiology, and to refine our promising new pheromone-based methods for toad control.
One major stimulus for the expansion has been the success of recent applications for funding. In particular, the Australian Research Council awarded a 5-year Laureate Fellowship to Rick, and a 4-year Future Fellowship to Greg Brown. Building on other funding (notably, a 5-year ARC grant for NSW cane toad studies, which is keeping Matt Greenlees off the street), we are hoping to make rapid progress in pursuing evolutionary-ecological questions, and refining our new ideas on toad control. We have also obtained funding for other collaborative toad-impact and toad-ecology studies (with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy), and a grant to investigate the ecology of reptiles and frogs in highland peat swamps in the Blue Mountains.

The cane toad research has been getting a lot of publicity lately, and has attracted a swag of awards. It won the environment section of the Australian Innovation Challenge for 2011 (a federal government initiative), and Rick was appointed the NSW Plant and Animal Scientist of the year, as well as receiving the 2011 Eureka Prize for Promoting Public Understanding of Science. He was elected as the 2012 Honorary Member by the Ecological Society of America. After spending about 30 years being ignored by the media while he studied snakes, Rick is still somewhat bemused by all the accolades and attention that have been poured over his bald head since he decided to try to find out something about cane toads.

**Postdoctoral fellows**

The end of an era dawned earlier this year when Jonno Webb relinquished his longterm postdoc position (2000 to 2012) to take up a tenured academic position at the University of Technology, just down the road from Sydney Uni. Rick and Jonno will continue their collaboration on the long-running broad-headed snake project, and on the work with taste-aversion training of predators that are threatened by cane toads. They are also maintaining their enthusiastic and occasionally successful joint assaults on the edible fish that can be caught off the local beaches (mostly, it must be admitted, by Jonno rather than by Rick).

Three other shorter-term postdocs also departed the Shine Lab. Ligia Pizzatto (2006-2011) left the warmth of our Middle Point field station (near Darwin) to work on frog ecology from Newcastle University, with Mike Mahony’s group. We hope that Mike doesn’t ask her to work on any winter-breeding frogs; the thermal shock might be awful. Sylvain Dubey (2007-11), our molecular guru, finally couldn’t stand life without Swiss chocolate any longer, so he returned to Switzerland to take up a postdoctoral position at the University of Lausanne. History says that most of our postdocs who return to Europe end up returning frequently to enjoy some sunshine and fishing, so hopefully we’ll see more of Sylvain and Maya. Our newly-arrived postdoc Takashi Haramura (2011-12) unfortunately had to return to Japan due to ill health, cutting short his plans to study toad pheromones. Even with all those departures, we are left with four continuing postdocs. We have extracted the following information from them (or if they wouldn’t provide any, we invented it):

Gregory P. Brown (1998-present). Greg has been a fixture at our Fogg Dam research station for well over a decade. His original project was on the ecology of tropical snakes, and that still continues. His new Future Fellowship will allow him to use his longterm mark-recapture data sets on keelbacks and slatey-grey snakes to look at questions about the functional consequences and heritability of immuno-competence. In his spare time, he plans to continue feeding marshmallows to his pet water buffaloes, and exploring toad ecology and impact in increasing detail.
Michael Crossland (2006-present). Michael is also based in the Top End, working with Rick and collaborators at The University Of Queensland to better understand the chemical ecology of cane toad tadpoles. Recently, the team identified the chemicals used by cannibalistic toad tadpoles to locate (and then consume) toad eggs, and demonstrated that traps baited with this chemical efficiently remove most or all toad tadpoles from ponds with negligible native by-catch. Michael and Rick also recently discovered that toad tadpoles reduce the growth and survival of toad eggs via chemical inhibition, and are continuing to investigate this interaction.

Matt Greenlees (2009-present). Matt continues to work under an ARC-linkage grant looking at the biology, impacts and control of cane toads in New South Wales. Over the summer months he frequently disappears north to what he assures us are highly unpleasant study sites between Yamba and the Queensland border. Rapidly tumbling down the slippery slope into academia, he is co-supervising a PhD student, an honours student and a master’s student working on toads. He will also be working on a new project for which we’ve just received a grant on the ecology of temperate highland peat swamps, which will no doubt have a distinctly herpetofaunal flavour. Matt is also co-supervising a PhD student on this project. Further, he has recently taken on some undergraduate teaching, co-ordinating a second and third year fieldwork-based subject run in the top end, giving him an excuse to go and visit the cane toads he first met during Honours and his PhD.

Tom Lindstrom (2011-present). Tom’s current main focus is hierarchical Bayesian modeling of cane toad movement behavior. Similar to hidden Markov models, observed movement paths (represented by turning angles and step lengths) may be assumed to be functions of discrete (unobserved) states, where dispersive state is characterized by long distant, directional moves and encamped states by shorter distance movements with larger turning angles. Further, toads do not switch randomly between states, but rather remain in the same state for a period of time before switching. Switching probabilities may be estimated jointly with the state specific movement parameters and parameters are estimated in a hierarchical Bayesian framework using Markov chain Monte Carlo techniques, hence population level parameters are estimated while acknowledging the uncertainty at the individual level. Due to the high dimensional parameter space, most work is dedicated to computational issues.

Graduate students
*There’s been lots of developments, so we’ll start with a quick summary of recent events …* First, several people have completed their Ph D studies. Late 2011 and early 2012 saw the submission of several Ph D theses, so that most of the impending graduation ceremonies at the University’s Great Hall will feature hordes of newly-minted herpetological doctors. More specifically, John Llewelyn (2006 to 2011, part-time) completed his thesis on the evolutionary impact of cane toads on predators, Ruchira Somaweera (2008 to 2012) completed his Ph D studies on the impact of cane toads on crocodiles; Crystal Kelehear (2008 to 2012) finished her work on host-parasite interactions (mostly, toads and things that live inside them), Sam Price-Rees (2008 to 2012) completed her studies on the biology of tropical bluetongue lizards, and Reid Tingley (2009 to 2012) looked at various facets of cane toad invasion biology (with a bizarre masochistic fondness for modeling).
Ben Croak has been buried under data and manuscript drafts for months now. He has some neat stories to tell about the effectiveness of his habitat restoration project, the effects of destroying his habitat restoration project and about the summer time activities of broad-headed snakes (who’d have thought they don’t like booze, beaches and BBQs). His PhD thesis is in its final throes. Ben is missing his field sites and is looking forward to a good sampling session in September followed by a bit of a break while he figures out what to do next and pursues the activities that don’t seem to appeal to broad-headed snakes at that time of the year.

Edna González-Bernal succeeded (just) in finishing her thesis before the thesis finished her. She tried to make sense of all sorts of results that relate to how cane toads take advantage of the kinds of modified habitats produced by human activities. Those results range from stories about toads on cowpats, through how the toads get benefits from cowpats and how they impact cowpat decomposition, the habitat use of toads in human modified sites, and social facilitation and personality in cane toads. She has now left the warm and paradisiacal Middle Point to live in the cold and beautiful Sydney, far away from her beloved toads. That list will get even longer very soon. Edna Gonzalez-Bernal’s thesis on cane toad habitat use has just been submitted, and Ben Croak’s thesis on habitat restoration for the endangered broad-headed snake is also close to completion. Elisa Cabrera-Guzman’s work on cane toad larval ecology and control is scheduled for completion later this year.

So, who is left among the grad students? Cissy Ballen (whose major supervisor is Mats Olsson) is studying sex in dragons, and colour change in chameleons (honorary dragons). Josh Amiel is working on learning in reptiles. Uditha Wijethunga, who only arrived from Sri Lanka in 2012, has launched into studies on the ecology and impact of cane toads on the southern (NSW) front. And Sarsha Gorissen just arrived in late 2012 to start her PhD – remarkably, on montane lizards instead of cane toads.

And now for some more detail …

Cissy Ballen has embarked on the third year of her PhD, shifting her main focus from one study species (painted dragons, *Ctenophorus pictus*) to another (veiled chameleons, *Chamaeleo calyptratus*). She is examining how developmental environments affect behavior and signaling ability of chameleons. Her studies have brought clarity to selective forces that may explain the bright colors of her study subjects. However, they have failed to explain the catastrophe that is the mate signaling strategies employed by her male lab mates.

Elisa Cabrera-Guzmán has traveled from sunny Mexico to even sunnier Middle Point to do her PhD on interactions between cane toads and various native animal species in the Northern Territory. In one part of her research she is investigating competitive interactions between tadpoles of cane toads and tadpoles of native frogs in the lab and in the field. In particular, she wants to know if native tadpoles affect the success of cane toad tadpoles, and what mechanisms are involved in these interactions. The other main focus of her research investigates predation on cane toads (tadpoles and metamorphs) by terrestrial and aquatic native species.
She would like to know if this invasive species represents an important food resource for some predators, and whether we might be able to use this information to find native species for biological control of this troublesome anuran.

**Sarsha Gorissen** has just started her Ph D, on conservation issues associated with the herpetofauna of the distinctive hanging swamps of the Blue Mountains.

**Uditha Wijethunga** came to Australia to do her doctoral studies on the invasion of cane toads into New South Wales, supervised by Rick and Matt. She will investigate the consequences to embryonic and larval life-history stages of *R. marina* (the cane toad) of varied pH, salinity and thermal conditions as a result of the toads’ southward movement in New South Wales. Another focus of her research is to investigate whether cane toads are capable of adapting to cooler thermal environments. Uditha will also examine the ability of toads larval stages to co-exist with mosquito fish, *Gambusia holbrooki*, another invader which may either aid or hinder further invasion by the toads.

**Masters students**

**Damian Lettoof** is working with Matt Greenlees looking at the possibility of parasite transfer from invasive cane toads to native frogs, and vice versa. He is now adept at finding parasites in the messy bits inside road-squashed frogs.

**Chalene Bezzina** is looking at learning in garden skinks (genus *Lamopropholis*), following up some of Josh Amiel’s work. Chalene is also working in the lab taking care of some of our animals.

**Honours students**

**Iris Bleach** and **Mitch Scott** completed their Honours studies (on effects of toads on frog behavior, notably calling and burrow choice; and on social interactions in small-eyed snakes, respectively). Both survived the experience with flying colours. **Sam McCann** has joined Matt Greenlees’ ever-expanding empire of research on toads in NSW. Sam will focus on dispersal behavior of toads at the southern front, trying to explain how a giant frog from the Brazilian rainforest is managing to climb cold mountains on the Border Ranges. We’ll be collaborating with **Dave Newell** from SCU Lismore on that project.

**Research Assistants**

In recent months we lost **Michelle Grey**, who had been working up at the tropical research station. Michelle still works for us on a casual basis, however. **Jai Thomas** came back on deck, but then disappeared to continue his academic studies. **George Madani** has just joined up, and we expect **Chris Jolly** to start work before too long.

**Melanie Elphick** is still running the Sydney lab, as she has been for the last 17 years. Now that the Catholic Church has officially made Mary McKillop a saint, we all think they should turn their attention to Mel, as the next cab off the rank.
A random selection of publications from the Shine Lab since 2011


Shine, R. 2011. How can we ensure that conservation policies are based on science, not emotion? *Pacific Conservation Biology* 17:6-10.


Beckmann, C., and R. Shine. 2012. How many of Australia’s ground-nesting birds are likely to be at risk from the invasive cane toad (Rhinella marina)? Emu 112:83-89.


Bohm, M. and 216 other authors. 2012. The conservation status of the world’s reptiles. *Biological Conservation*, in press.


**Frank Lemckert**

Well, as most people would know, I was asked by the NSW Government to reconsider my career path last year and so have now moved into a Private Consultancy – Niche Environment and Heritage. This is based in Sydney and I am the Team Lead for Ecology, but the Directors have been very supportive of my continuing association with ASH and trying to retain some linkage with research. This might be more possible with the appointment of my old boss, Rod Kavanagh, to the role of Team Leader Monitoring and Research, with the aim that we attract some work in more science and research related areas. So, fingers crossed this comes to pass.

Currently I have maintained quite a froggy involvement though impact assessments and site monitoring for Bell Frogs in the Nowra area and monitoring of threatened frogs in the southern coalfields and around Nerong on the lower north coast of NSW. I am continuing my monitoring of frogs in the Watagan Mountains, at least privately for the moment, but I hope that Forests NSW will support this as they have no other frog monitoring of any type currently in place. I was also able to present talks on frogs at the World Congress in Canada and the Ecological Consultants Association.

In the coming year I plan to also undertake some further assessment of the status of the heath frog (*Litoria littlejohni*) with some assistance from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. There could be two species involved and very little is known about the frog south of the Nowra, even though it has a range all of the way into eastern Victoria. I retain a foothold in real research through as assisting role for Sarsha at the University of Sydney in her upcoming work on Upland Swamps. I will continue to assist in the running of the NSW Declining Frog Working Group, which continues to hold two meetings a year at various locations around NSW and provides an active link between researchers and Government Agencies. And of course,
I look forward to helping host ASH at Lake Macquarie. Who knows what I will report on next Newsletter. Consultancies are not noted for this (yet) but Niche-EH did win an award for excellence from BHP.

It was nice to get to Canada and Dave and I are hoping that the kids will turn up to ASH for a bit of a reunion. They just have to promise to behave themselves or there will be no icecream.


University of Newcastle Froglab
The frog lab at the University of Newcastle has grown large enough that we are no longer required to invite the plant lab in order to form mad rave parties. We are looking forward to helping Dr Lemckert host the next ASH conference and showing you a good time (winky face). Mike Mahony continues to head the lab and sneaks out into beautiful remote rainforest areas when he can. His son, Stephen Mahony has now started undergraduate biology and echoes of lectures on gecko taxonomy and frog ecology reverberate around the lab. John Clulow is continuing research in all things physiological and has recently bought a canoe.

Many of the team have just returned from their trip to North America for the World Congress of Herpetology where research on frog chromosomes, bell frog ecology and stress hormones were all presented. Ligia Pizzatto has recently joined our team to head a project on frog behaviour to assist in managing threatened species. Michelle Stockwell has been postdocing away with her army of students and volunteers on Kooragang Island. Within Michelle’s team, Loren Bainbridge has been branded ‘the best research assistant ever’ and may possibly take over the lab.
before she finishes her undergrad. **Jose Valdez** continues to amuse everyone with his New York accent and views on waist-to-hip ratios, as he collects data for his Ph.D. on bell frog demographics.

**Kaya Klop-Toker** is a kiwi so we give her a great deal of sh*t but fortunately for her, she is a mad dancer and works on bell frogs too, so we let it slide. **David Wright** has just joined the lab and is still trying to meet everyone, he may manage to do so by the time he completes his Ph.D. on spatial modelling of bell frog populations. **Melanie James** won a university medal with her first class honours on bell frog behaviour and after a holiday of knitting, she came back to do a Ph.D. and take her research further. Honours student **Ana Fuesse** just finished her thesis on peptides and chytrid.

**Deb Bower** and **Simon Clulow** spent the last month bothering gila monsters, snapping turtles, soft-shelled turtles, horned lizards and alligators in the states. Deb Bower likes to strut around saying “that’s Doctor Deb to you” and continues to manage the bell frog research at Sydney Olympic Park. On team Sydney Olympic Park: **Evan Pickett** has just had a manuscript accepted in Biological Conservation and when he’s not modelling at his computer, he can been seen photographing insects – TRAITOR!!!!. **James Garnham** is hooning around killing rats to see if they eat frogs and analysing data for his thesis, when he’s not playing his electric uke (yes I said electric uke, you wish you were that cool!). **Carla Pollard** has just re-joined the lab after a break from thesising and is excited to be writing papers and being immersed back into the madness of banter, which is the frog lab. The team has recently been joined by a new honours student **Brad McCaffery** who will be looking at the influence of productivity on frog behaviour and demographics. **Paul Taylor** is continuing his masters on heavy metal and chytrid dynamics.

**Simon Clulow** continues to write up his Ph.D. and work as a post(doc) on bell frog ecology on Kooragang Island, magnificent tree frogs in the Kimberley, impacts of trout in New England blah blah. **Tom Garnham** recently received first class honours and the university medal for his honours on *Lechriodus fletcheri* and nest site selection. He hopes to continue his research with a Ph.D. in the near future. **Marion Ansitis** submitted her Ph.D., which means her book will be ready in due course – we are all very proud! **Rodney Wattus**, **John Gould**, **Cassie Thompson** and **Hugh James** are all a rare strain of super-volunteer that are beginning to lead their own projects before their coursework is even through and will probably serve you beer at the next ASH conference. **Anna McConville** is in the lab madly writing up her Ph.D., (even though it is on bats, we suspect there isn’t much hope that the word frog won’t appear somewhere in her thesis, given the 20 odd people talking about them constantly around her). Wahhhhhhhhh wah wah wah.

In other frog related news, **Drew Dittmer** recently started a Ph.D. with Joe Bidwell on frogs in Uluru and may look at lizards communities on the side.
Australian Museum – Herpetology Section.

We’re still here: **Ross Sadlier** (Collection Manager); **Cecilie Beatson** (Technical Officer); **Jodi Rowley** (Scientific Officer); **Glenn Shea** (Research Associate).

Jodi continues to investigate the diversity, ecology and conservation of Southeast Asian amphibians, and is now co-chair for the mainland Southeast Asian branch of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Amphibian Specialist Group. Her most recent expeditions in search of amphibians were in northern Vietnam in mid-2012. Ross and Cecilie planned a collecting trip to the Pilbara region of Western Australia in March 2012 just in time to coincide with cyclone Lua, interesting. Ross has continuing research interests in New Caledonia with several papers published with colleagues in the past 6 months with more submitted for publication in 2013, and participated as expert herpetologist (with Tony Whitaker – NZ) on an IUCN workshop assigning taxa to Red List categories in January last year. Glenn continues to frequent the lab, eat our biscuits and occasionally look at *Sphenomorphus* group skinks. For visiting herpetologists the Friday delivery by Dr Shea of ‘Herpetologist of the Week’ is sometimes on offer, and will definitely give an inside edge on ASH trivia nights more obscure questions.


Marion Anstis
I am finally able to celebrate, as I have submitted my PhD entitled Tadpoles, Eggs and Frogs of Australia, together with four other published papers as follows:


The book will be published by New Holland in 2013 and I should be able to have some brochures about it available at the next ASH meeting. It covers 239 species of frogs and includes a description of each frog, and the eggs, tadpoles and metamorphs for most species. There are keys and various sections on tadpole and egg descriptions and these are grouped in adaptive types, as are the oral discs of tadpoles, which are the key to identification for many species. Taxonomy has been approached in light of the embryonic/larval morphology and thus I have diverged somewhat from the current Frost/Read *et al.* classification with regards to *Mixophyes* and *Rheobatrachus* in particular, pending future work of Keogh *et al.*, but have also resurrected *Bryobatrachus* for *Crinia nimba*.

Currently I am working on a few papers, including a description of *Litoria multiplica* tadpole from PNG with Steve Richards, and also a full description of the north Qld stream-dwelling tadpoles of the *Litoria nannotis* group (also including *Litoria myola*), with Conrad Hoskin as co-author. I have described these in my book, but the paper will include further information.

I would like to thank my supervisor Michael Mahony for his guidance over the last 4 years, and the Newcastle lab team, many of whom have helped in various ways during this large project. I wish you all good luck in your individual projects!
ANU
Keogh Lab
Recent departures: Conrad Hoskin and Megan Higbie recently finished up at ANU and are now both established as Lecturers at James Cook University. Renee Catullo recently finished her PhD on the phylogenetics and biogeography of Uperoleia frogs and she is about to start a postdoc at CSIRO. Kate Umbers recently finished a postdoc and she is now back at Macquarie University. Peri Bolton recently finished her honours on the phylogenetics of Australia’s small burrowing elapididae.

Scott Keogh (Honours student). Scott recently, and very reluctantly, took over as Head of Evolution, Ecology and Genetics at ANU. No one really knows what he does now.

Lisa Schwanz (Postdoc). Lisa moved to the ANU this year to begin her ARC DECRA fellowship. She will be studying how the reproductive ecology of Amphibolurus muricatus varies across geography and climate. In particular, the research will focus on aspects of temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD) in this species. The goal is to gain broad insight into the adaptive evolution and ecological consequences of TSD in fluctuating or warming climates using a model reptile system.

Mitzy Pepper (Postdoc). Mitzy is finding it very difficult to leave the ANU and suffers emotional panic attacks at the thought of not being part of the Keogh Lab one day. Scott has kindly given her a postdoc after getting back from a ‘gap year’. She is currently helping Scott with projects on African Platysaurus and Australian Euapalpus lizard phylogenies and is almost finished describing two new Heteronotia species (with Paul D, Craig M, Matt F and Scott K) – this hasn’t happened since 1989! Knowing what we all know about Hets, this is just the beginning….. No one has sent Mitzy a tissue sample from the Mariala NP beak-faced gecko yet, so the genetics of this species remains a mystery. I am keeping a hopeful eye on my postbox ASH’ers - there’s a beer in it for you!!

Marta Vidal-Garcia (PhD student) conducted her Masters project last year in the Keogh Lab, and she just came back from Spain to start a PhD. Marta will be looking at the evolution of body size and shape in the three big families of Australian frogs (Myobatrachidae, Hylidae and Microhylidae). She will be using different morphometric techniques to try to understand temporal patterns of diversification.

Daniel Hoops (PhD Student). Dan has spent the past year trying to sort out what has been and can be done with lizard brains. He is using dragons as a model to study underlying changes in neuroanatomy that accompany the evolution of sexually selection traits. He has started by mapping the brains of dragons using both state-of-the-art 3D imaging and traditional histological slicing and cell-staining. He is currently using both methods to quantify sexual differences across different agamid species with the aim of relating sexually selected trains to sex differences in the brain.

Gabi Openshaw (Honours Student). Gabi is studying the evolution of Australian goanna head shape as it relates to phylogeny, diet and habitat preferences. She is using both traditional morphometric approaches as well as 3D imaging with CT scans.
The Fenner School of Environment and Society is home to a range of applied herpetological projects, supervised by Don Driscoll, David Lindenmayer, Phil Gibbons, Damian Michael and others.

Ben Scheele has been investigating chytridiomycosis dynamics in populations of susceptible frog species that have different decline patterns in the Snowy Mountains.

Chloe Sato’s PhD examines the effects of ski-related disturbances on alpine skinks. There are three main parts: 1) Comparing abundances of different skinks in three different habitats (grass, heath and woodland) in disturbed areas (ski resorts) and in undisturbed areas (Kosi NP). 2) Looking at the effects of patch size and isolation on skink abundances (using ski run islands); 3) Investigating how temperature may interact with patch size/isolation to drive habitat selection in skinks.

Nélida Villaseñor’s PhD has a focus on the effect of urban development on wildlife. In particular, she will examine the distribution of pond breeding amphibians across an urban-natural gradient in NSW coastal forest. She wants to know which habitat and landscape-level variables help populations and communities to persist in human dominated environments, and apply that knowledge to landscape planning.

Juliana Lazzari, recently completed her third field season trapping reptiles in the highly modified northern Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. The project aim is to test the prediction that absence of fire in fragmented landscapes could cause regional declines of fire specialist reptile species. Annabel Smith completed her PhD examining fire responses, genetic structure, dispersal and demography of reptiles, with a particular focus on Nephurus stellatus, Amphibolurus norrisi and Ctenotus atlas.

Martin Westgate is investigating the role of fire in shaping the selection of terrestrial and aquatic habitats by frogs in Jervis Bay, NSW, and will submit his PhD in August 2012.

Institute for Applied Ecology (University of Canberra)
There are a range of herp related projects at the Institute for Applied Ecology supervised by the likes of Arthur Georges, Stephen Sarre, Will Osborne, Tariq Ezaz, and Bernd Gruber. The IAE also heads up a large project with BGI, Shenzhen to sequence the genome of the central beared dragon, Pogona vitticeps. The international team includes researches from Australia, China, Japan and the USA and plans to release the first draft genome in 2012, the year of the dragon.

Comings and Goings: Theresa Knopp has returned to Finland after completing a post-doc on the conservation genetics of the Pink-tailed Worm-lizard Aprasia parapulchella. Lisa Doucette has recently arrived to undertake a post-doc on conservation of the Grassland Earless Dragon Tymanocryptis pinguicolla. Carla Eisemberg has migrated to warmer climes after completing her PhD on nesting biology and harvest dynamics of the pig-nosed turtle in the Kikori region, PNG. Arthur Georges continues to work on sex determination in Australian dragons and phylogeography of Australasian turtles.
Stephen Sarre is also involved with projects relating to sex determination of dragons as well as conservation of the threatened reptile fauna of the ACT. He is currently attending the World Congress of Herpetology in Vancouver.

Will Osborne is working on various projects, mainly relating to threatened reptiles of the ACT and region. He and David Wong (with the help of park carers and students) have completed a detailed survey of *Aprasia parapulchella* in the Mt Taylor reserve (an urban reserve in Canberra). The survey provided a reassessment of the status of the species in the reserve and follows up a detailed survey undertaken by Will in the same reserve 20 years ago. The density and distribution recorded was the same as that found in the earlier survey although the occurrence of regenerated tails was very high compared to that found in areas remote from Canberra. Will and David have also undertaken extensive surveys for *Aprasia* in the Molonglo Valley to provide advice to the ACT Government concerning the very rapid urban expansion occurring in this important local region. Will has followed this up by writing a Chapter on *Aprasia parapulchella* in a management plan for new Molonglo River Corridor reserve network planned for the valley. An updated edition of Ken Green’s and Will’s book *A Field Guide to Wildlife of the Australian Snow Country* has just been published. Amongst other chapters, the book includes chapters on wildlife habitats, the ecology of snow, reptiles, frogs and a new chapter on climate change.

Denis O’Meally is looking at gene-environment inactions in *Bassiana* sex determination in the Snowy Mountains. He’s also working on the evolution of Z chromosome dosage compensation and genomic imprinting in Australian snakes.

Maria Boyle is in her third year of her PhD and currently modeling the effects of demographics, climate and dispersal on populations with temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD) and preparing thesis chapters.

Emma Carlson has recently completed her Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Canberra, and is just starting her Honours in Applied Science. She will be using microsatellite DNA genotyping to investigate the genetics of both the Cooma and ACT populations of grassland earless dragon *Tympanocryptis pinguicolla*. In her spare time, she loves caring for her private menagerie (including several beard-ed dragons, blue tongues, carpet pythons, green tree frogs and a recent addition, *Nephrurus amyae*), volunteering at the Canberra Reptile Sanctuary, and exploring the ACT region looking for wild herps!

Bruno Ferronato is into his second year of his PhD and is spending a lot of time at locations around Canberra as he investigates the ecology of the eastern long-necked turtle *Chelodina longicollis* along a natural-urban gradient in the ACT.

Kate Hodges is continuing long and lonely nights and weekends writing up her PhD on the systematics and phylogeography of long-necked turtles in eastern Australia. She has been working fulltime at the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for the past year doing environmental watering, and is looking forward to the next ASH where you can remind her what it is to party.

Tim McGrath is in his 3rd year as a part time Masters student at the University of Canberra and is conducting research on the grassland earless dragon on the Monaro Tablelands of NSW. Tim is investigating the distribution, habitat and detectability of the species. Tim recently published a short paper in Herpetological review on the trial use of cameras to detect the grassland earless dragon.
David Wong is (95% confident he is) in the final stages of his PhD which focusses on the effect of agricultural modification on the Pink-tailed Worm-lizard *Aprasia parapulchella*. He is using species distribution modeling and other modelling approaches to determine the role of agricultural disturbance in determining presence and abundance of the species. His findings suggest that presence of large tussock grasses that decline with agricultural modification are a key predictor for the species.

**UNSW Canberra**

Dustin Welbourne is working on his PhD which involves optimising survey methodologies for ecological communities, with one part being about the use of cameras with reptiles. He will be presenting a paper at the Camera Symposium in September about cameras and reptiles and how it can be done. His recent work on predictive modelling of non-indigenous reptile species should soon be published.

**Recent Publications**


Hay, J.M; Sarre, SD; Lambert, DM; Allendorf, FW; Daugherty, CH. (2010). Genetic diversity and taxonomy: a reassessment of species designation in tuatara
Hoehn, M., Osborne, W. S., Aitken, N. and Sarre, S.D. (2010). Isolation and character-
ization of 10 tetranucleotide microsatellites in the Grassland Earless Dragon (Tymp-
Knopp, T. and Sarre, S.D. 2012. Identification of microsatellite markers for the Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Aprasia parapulchella (Kluge): an endangered py-
gopodid. Conservation Genetics Resources 4, 3: 733-735
Marques, T.S., Tassoni-Filho, M., Ferronato, B.O., Guardia, I., Verdae, L.M., Ca-
margo, P.B. . (2011). Isotopic signatures (δ13C and δ15N) of muscle, cara-


MINUTES FOR 34TH AGM OF THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF HERPETOLOGISTS – BARMERA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA (21/9/2010)

Meeting opened and welcome by Mark Hutchinson at 5:57 pm.

Apologies: Graeme Gillespie, Mike Mahony, Dale Roberts, Michelle Stockwell, Jane Melville, Trent Penman, John Clulow.


Treasurers Report: Glenn Shea noted that he was sorting out some anomalies with bank statements, but the cents added up. More would be reported on at the next AGM.

The reports were moved to be accepted by Murray Littlejohn and seconded by Eridani Mulder. They were accepted unanimously.

Committee: It was proposed that the committee be recognised as standing for the 2009/2010 financial year. This was nominated by Simon Hudson and seconded by Lin Schwarzkopf and was unanimously endorsed.

The meeting closed at 6:00PM.

MINUTES FOR 35TH AGM OF THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF HERPETOLOGISTS – BARMERA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA (21/9/2010)

The meeting was opened by Mark Hutchinson at 6:01PM.

Apologies: Graeme Gillespie, Mike Mahony, Dale Roberts, Michelle Stockwell, Jane Melville, Trent Penman, John Clulow.

Secretary’s Report: Frank Lemckert noted there were 74 members paid up for the 2010/2011 financial year as well as the five life members and that there were 35 new members in that list. Frank noted that a number of people were not paid up members even though they thought they were as any dues received recently were put towards the previous year’s membership if they were not paid up for that year (2009/2010). Frank will inform all people who are not paid up what they owe to be fully financial members. Marc Hero believed that people should be considered paid up for the following year after payment even if they were not financial the previous year. Mike Thompson noted that this was not constitutional and missed years needed to be filled in. This was also a problem that the auditors had noted to Glenn Shea and payments need to avoid skipping years wherever possible. Memento (Hermes) Hudson noted that this should not be a problem as the fee was very low. Frank noted that people, including Rick Shine, wanted a credit card facility for fee payment. This is something that the incoming treasurer can investigate, but Glenn Shea noted that this is not as simple to implement as it seems.
Treasurer’s Report: Glenn noted that the books still need work to reconcile payments from various areas. Money from the WA conference had still not been transferred to the ASH books because of missing paperwork and the need to transfer signatories, which is not easy to do. This is hopefully to be rectified by the new ASH Committee. Glenn noted that the ASH membership and membership renewal forms on the web had contained the old ASH prices until only very recently and that this had resulted in a significant reduction in fees that could have been collected. Frank noted that this had been changed only with some delay after several requests to do so, but should not be a problem any longer, although new forms would need to be posted to reflect changes in the ASH Committee. Glenn did note that the direct deposit system had provided some benefits, but there were problems with people not having provided notification to Glenn of their payments to the bank and so it was not clear who had always paid money and when, especially as it took some time for bank statements to arrive and some were missing. Four people were noted to have said that they had paid into the account, but no money had been received in the account and it was not clear where the money had gone. One member had sent two cheques without signing them and another had sent multiple cheques to pay for the same fees.

Simon Hudson moved that both reports be accepted and this was seconded by Lin Schwarzkopf. They were accepted by the members.

Glenn noted that all people who had paid will have receipts sent to them very shortly.

Business arising (and deferred from previous meeting).
Marc Hero provided an update on the bid for the 2016 World Congress. He asks that all people save and attend the 2012 Congress in Canada to provide representation for Australia. Proposals for the 2016 Congress will open shortly. Scott Keogh is working on the 2016 bid, noting that Australia last held the Congress in Adelaide in 1993. Deb Bower asked where it would be held. Scott and Marc Hero indicated in August 2016 in Cairns. Mike Thompson had noted that calls had been made for symposia for the 2012 Congress. ASH should aim to host at least one. He also noted that, at the last World Congress (Manaus), China had indicated an interest in holding a World Congress and would support Australia’s bid for 2016 if we supported their bid for 2020. There are concerns that Australia may lose the bid because we have already held one World Congress and so other Asian nations would have priority. ASH should consider further its options.

Mike Thompson noted that he was charged with putting information on the ASH website in regards to bequests. He had researched this and it would be available soon.

Mark Hutchinson and Mike Thompson noted that the constitution was now rather old and could do with some refreshing to bring it up to more modern standards (eg including women as entities).
Mike Thompson spoke to the issue of maintaining a significant proportion of the ASH executive within one city or at least in close proximity. The current executive had needed to spend some considerable time organising accounts and membership which had not been maintained in a standard/continuous order through previous years and the fact that the executive had all been based in Sydney had greatly facilitated working through the problems that had arisen through time. These had been significant and threatened to lead to a loss of incorporation for the Society. Mike proposed that three core office bearers at least should be elected from the one city for a period of three years to ensure a better long-term management of ASH. This should rotate through Australia over time. The Presidency and the organiser of the next conference need not be the same as had occurred through more recent years. This was all acceptable under the constitution as the President, Vice-President and Ordinary Members can currently hold office for a maximum of three years. Ross Alford thought this may make things difficult for more regional areas and suggested that only the secretary and treasurer need be in the one place. Ben Phillips noted that it would be better for the office bearers to be in the same place as the conference. Apart from the President these are often separated. Deb Bower asked if three signatories are required within the executive and Mike Thompson said yes. Lin Schwarzkopf was concerned that rules might get in the way of effective organisation. The system had worked perfectly alright until recently. Mike Thompson noted that we had to run ASH according to the rules of our constitution. The regular changes and spatial separation of office bearers had led to a breakdown in communications over time and a failure to follow these rules in some instances. This had almost resulted in the dis-incorporation of the society.

Mike Thompson suggested that, whatever happens, there needs to be a review of the constitution and a review of wording. Mark Hutchinson suggested that the signatories, whoever that is, have to be in the same town at the same time in order to undertake some financial transactions of ASH. This includes all three having to go to the bank to change the current set of signatories to the new ones and change addresses for bank statements. Running ASH for three years at a time would be most efficient.

Glenn Shea noted that three main committee members need to be together to hold the AGM wherever and whenever it is held.

Glenn Shea next noted that there had been some threat of the Peter Rankin Trust Fund being closed down. It is the only discipline-based grant in Herpetology in Australia and pays out sums of up to $1000 per annum. It was initiated to commemorate Peter Rankin and the other Rankin family members were now deceased. The Australian Museum currently runs it and they now have no Research Manager in Herpetology, only a collections manager and there was consideration of winding the bequest down. The proposal has been put forward that ASH may wish to take over the running of the fund. This was a decision that the incoming committee should make and should talk with the AM about this.

Mike Thompson noted that, under the Constitution, endorsed nominations for each committee position need to be provided three weeks before the AGM and this had not taken place in the last two years. This needed to be rectified in the future.
Mark Hutchinson opened the floor for nominations for the new ASH committee.

Memento (Hermes) Hudson noted that there was still a need to determine if the Constitution should be changed and if there was a need to set the ASH committee structure.

Mike Thompson put forward a motion proposing that the President, Secretary and Treasurer take the respective role for three years and be from the same location. Simon Hudson suggested that this be amended so that only the Secretary and Treasurer be set this way. Mike Thompson noted that the President is a major contact point for the Society. Mark Hutchinson said that it worked okay still with an absentee president. Glenn Shea indicated that it worked well with the Secretary and Treasurer working together. Rick Shine suggested that these two positions should be in place for three years.

The motion was put forward then that the Treasurer, Secretary and one other ASH committee position be held for three years at a time (proposed Rick Shine and seconded by Frank Lemckert). This agreed to by majority vote.

Paul Doughty proposed that Lin Schwarzkopf be elected president. Seconded by Rick Shine and accepted unanimously.

Lin accepted, but noted her concerns that the “fixing” of positions was not a good idea and could cause problems. Mark Hutchinson noted that Mike Thompson had raised this because of problems that had occurred and this was a means to avoid them.

Simon Hudson proposed that Mark Hutchinson be elected vice-president. Seconded by Lin Schwarzkopf and accepted unanimously.

Nick Clemann proposed that Ben Phillips be elected treasurer. Seconded by Mark Hutchinson and accepted unanimously.

Frank Lemckert proposed that Deb Bower be elected editor. Seconded by Mike Thompson and accepted unanimously.

Marc Hero proposed that Eridani Mulder be elected secretary. Seconded by Marion Anstis and accepted unanimously.

Mike Thompson proposed that Matt Greenlees be elected an ordinary member. Seconded by Frank Lemckert and accepted unanimously.

Nick Clemann proposed that Leonie Valentine be elected an ordinary member. Seconded by Lin Schwarzkopf and accepted unanimously.

At this point in time it was proposed in absentia by Mike Tyler (through Mark Hutchinson) that Murray Littlejohn be ejected from the meeting. This was seconded by Simon Hudson and agreed to by majority vote. Murray almost left.

Scott Keogh was retained as the appointed Public Officer for ASH.
It was proposed that the next ASH Conference be held somewhere near Townsville in Queensland and be organised by Lin Schwarzkopf. Lin suggested winter 2012, but it was noted that this would clash with the World Congress year. Simon Hudson noted that ASH traditionally does not hold a meeting in World Congress years. It was suggested around Christmas, but Lin noted that this would be hot and cyclone season. Mike Bull suggested holding it in 2011. Rick Shine suggested that ASH could reasonably now be held every 12 months as was the case for most other Australian societies. Lin said that she would consider this and send out ideas. Marc Hero suggested that World Congress years be ASH conference “leap” years.

Memento noted that she did not like concurrent sessions and could their continued use be discussed by the new committee. Lin noted that it works out better with so many talks. Simon Hudson suggested adding a day. Mark Hutchinson pointed out that extending conference length added to the expense, a significant factor for students, and so concurrent sessions allowed a maximum number of presentations without making the conference unduly long. Eridani Mulder and Deb Bower suggested, speed talks (only five minutes). Ross Alford said that this worked okay for the Amphibian Disease Conference. It will be considered.