

23 October 2008

THREATENED FROGS FOUND AT BENDIGO WATER RECLAMATION PLANT

A threatened species of frogs were discovered last week at the Bendigo Water Reclamation Plant in Epsom through a monitoring program of various frog calls being undertaken at the site.

The Growling Grass Frog, *Litoria raniformis*, also known as the Southern Bell Frog, was once widespread in Victoria but has shown a marked decline in population in recent years. The frogs are listed as endangered under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as well as vulnerable under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Neil Burns, Acting Managing Director of Coliban Water said there were indications that the species was present at the site last year.

"A community member picked up the call of a male Growler through the North Central Waterwatch Frog Monitoring Program last year. This alerted frog researchers from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Arthur Rylah Institute in Melbourne to set up a more detailed habitat and population survey," he said.

It was found that the Water Reclamation Plant does provide suitable habitat for these frogs, which typically prefer to live in dams and irrigation channels with low salinity, plenty of aquatic vegetation for cover and minimal tree cover.

Mr Burns said that this find was significant and will help develop a greater understanding of the species.

"The reasons for the decline in the species are unclear, but it is believed to include the loss and degradation of suitable habitat.

"The researchers will continue to undertake surveys at the site, with the help of Coliban Water, to gain a greater understanding of the frogs' habitat preferences and hope to use this information to create new habitats close to existing populations," he said.

The Growling Grass Frog is up to 9.5cm in length, known to prey on other frogs. The frogs are bright emerald to dull olive green in colour with brown or gold blotches on a warty back.

If you think you have seen or heard Growling Grass Frogs, please notify the North Central Catchment Management Authority's Regional Waterwatch Coordinator Bianca Huider on 5440 1829.

Ends#