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GROWLING GRASS FROGS IN GOOD VOICE AT BENDIGO PLANT

The endangered Growling Grass Frog, named from its distinctive call, has been recorded in promising numbers in an annual survey at the Bendigo Water Reclamation Plant in Epsom.

Coliban Water Manager Community Operations Mick Dunne said more than 100 Growling Grass Frogs were recorded earlier this year living in the plants' numerous water bodies.

"Our latest survey took place over two nights in January when we recorded significantly higher numbers than our previous counts, which have been less than 30," said Mr Dunne.

"There are a number of factors that can influence the count, and future monitoring will determine if these numbers are reflective of the actual population size at the site and the increase in numbers recorded.

"Our Bendigo Water Reclamation Plant has 67 hectares of lagoons and treatment ponds that have a high biodiversity value. It attracts thousands of birds of local and international conservation significance, and supports native flora and fauna.

"The site is part of the Land for Wildlife (Victoria) program, which supports landholders who provide habitat for native wildlife even though the land is managed for other purposes.

"Our plant treats Bendigo's wastewater to a quality where it can be released into the environment to supplement local waterways and used to irrigate public gardens, sporting facilities and farms in the Bendigo area," said Mr Dunne.

The Growling Grass Frog was once found throughout south eastern Australia but is now only found in isolated populations throughout the region due to habitat loss, predators and disease.

"The species is listed as threatened in Victoria and vulnerable under the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and is protected by law," said Mr Dunne.

"We are committed to protecting the species and gave special consideration for its habitat at the planning and construction stages of two brine lagoons on the site in 2012 and 2017.

"Each year, five megalitres of treated water that would be used at the Fosterville Gold Mine is diverted to prevent a swamp from drying out where Growling Grass Frogs have been recorded. Fosterville Gold Mine supports our environmental obligations by agreeing to have the water diverted and paying the pumping costs.

"Our lagoons provide excellent habitat as they are dense with algae from nutrients and have ample rocks under which they are protected from predators and can emerge to feed," said Mr Dunne.

Around 5,000 properties, including more than 530,000 hectares of private land, are currently registered as Land for Wildlife (Victoria).

Further information on how we support biodiversity can be found on our Land Management and Biodiversity web page.

Further information on Land for Wildlife (Victoria) can be found on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website.