



MURRAY CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

CORROBOREE FROGS

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Northern Corroboree Frog © Dave Hunter



Southern Corroboree Frog © Dave Hunter

Northern and Southern Corroboree Frogs are two of Australia's most iconic frog species, but they are also two of Australia's most endangered.

What are they?

There are two closely related species of Corroboree Frog: the Southern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne corroboree*), and the Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*). Both species are between 2.5 and 3 centimetres in length.

Where are they found?

Corroboree Frogs are only found in a small area of south-eastern New South Wales. The Southern Corroboree Frog only occurs in Kosciuszko National Park at altitudes between 1300 and 1700 metres. The Northern Corroboree Frog occurs in Northern Kosciuszko National Park, Namadgi National Park, Brindabella National Park and some adjacent state forests above 750 metres altitude.

Life cycle of the Corroboree Frogs

Corroboree Frogs breed in high altitude bogs and swamps. The males call during summer from nests in thick vegetation at the edges of pools and seepages. Female Corroboree Frogs are attracted to these calls and lay their eggs in the nests. The eggs develop and hatch when sufficient rain falls in autumn and winter; the rain floods the nest sites and stimulates the tadpoles to hatch. Once hatched, the tadpoles move through the vegetation into a main pool where they metamorphose by the following summer. It then takes four years for the frogs to reach sexual maturity and repeat the life-cycle.

Conservation Status

Both Corroboree Frog species have been in a rapid state of decline since the mid 1980s. The Southern Corroboree Frog has now declined in more than 98% of its former range, and is likely to become extinct in the wild without human intervention. The Southern Corroboree Frog is listed as critically endangered at both a state and national level. Latest surveys indicated that less than 50 Southern Corroboree Frogs are left in the wild.

The Northern Corroboree Frog has also undergone substantial declines across its range. The decline of this species has been particularly severe in the Brindabella Ranges, where it has become almost entirely extinct from the Australian Capital Territory. The species is listed as critically endangered at both the state and national level.

Why are populations in decline?

The decline of Corroboree Frogs, and many other frog species throughout Australia, is due to a disease known as chytridomycosis, which is caused by infection with the Amphibian Chytrid Fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*). Amphibian Chytrid Fungus is a recent introduction to Australia, which is why many of Australia's frog species have limited resistance to this pathogen. This pathogen is believed to have originated from South Africa, and is likely to have been introduced into Australia on the African Clawed Frog, which was imported by pharmaceutical companies between the 1930s and 1960s.



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Images

1. Belly of a Southern Corroboree Frog © Dave Hunter
2. Young Corroboree Frogs © Murray CMA
3. Montane peatlands — habitat of the Corroboree Frog © Dave Hunter

Why should we save Corroboree Frogs?

Corroboree Frogs are considered an iconic Australian species, and are an important component of our natural heritage. Given their uniqueness and inherent value to our nation, it would be a tragedy if Corroboree Frogs became extinct and future generations were deprived of experiencing these remarkable creatures. Saving the Corroboree Frogs will also represent a major achievement for the conservation of amphibians globally. Worldwide, amphibians have declined and become extinct at a greater rate over the past 50 years than birds, reptiles or mammals. Australia alone has seen the extinction of six frog species in recent decades, with the Southern Corroboree Frog predicted to be the ninth if intervention does not occur.

Can we save the Corroboree Frogs?

Saving the Corroboree Frogs will require helping them to develop resistance to the Amphibian Chytrid Fungus. This aim will be best achieved by maintaining Corroboree Frog populations in the wild through a captive breeding and reintroduction program. This process will allow the development of resistance to the Amphibian Chytrid Fungus through continued exposure to this pathogen under natural conditions.

Captive Breeding

A program is currently breeding Corroboree frogs in captivity across Australia and re-introducing healthy frogs, free of the deadly fungus, into the wild.

Captive breeding of Corroboree Frogs takes place in Taronga Zoo, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (ACT), Healesville Sanctuary, Melbourne Zoo and the Amphibian Research Centre in Melbourne. The captive breeding program has successfully bred Corroboree frogs for a number of years and frogs, tadpoles and eggs are being reintroduced into habitat in Kosciuszko National Park.

Additional information

Visit the Corroboree Frog Website:

corroboreefrog.org.au

for more information on Corroboree Frogs and how you can help in their recovery.



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