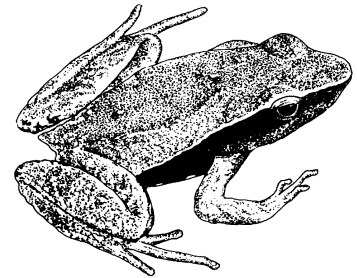


# Tropical Factsheets

## Frogs croak

- All four **Australian frog families** are found in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. These include the **Treefrogs** (Hylidae), the **Litterfrogs** (Microhylidae), the **Southern frogs** (Myobatrachidae) and the **Bullfrogs** (Ranidae).
- About **53 species of frogs** are found in the Wet Tropics – the highest diversity in Australia.
- About **21 frog species** are endemic to this region – that means they are found nowhere else in the world. Many are limited to very small areas.
- Our knowledge of rainforest frogs is very **recent**. Only about half of them have been studied and given scientific names since 1970. More are being discovered by scientists all the time.



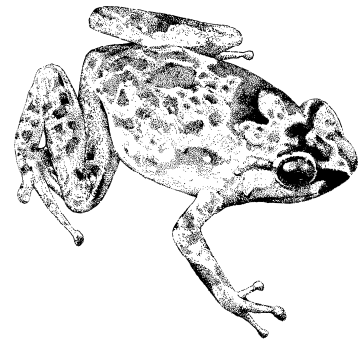
*Sharp-snouted  
Torrent Frog*

## Disappearing frogs

- Frogs seem to be **disappearing**. In areas where frog numbers have been seriously depleted, people have discovered, too late, their value in controlling insects.
- Frogs are especially vulnerable to **chemicals and pollution** because they absorb moisture through their skin.
- Wetlands are being fragmented and destroyed by **development** such as agriculture, housing, roads and power lines.
- **Removing vegetation** from creek banks removes the places where frogs live, breed and feed.
- In Australian rainforests, declines of frogs were first noticed in **south-east Queensland** in the late 1970s.
- The next area to be affected was the **Eungella Plateau** near Mackay in central Queensland in the mid-1980s.
- During the early 1990s **seven frog species found only in the Wet Tropics** either declined in huge numbers or completely disappeared from the face of the planet!
- The frogs disappeared very quickly. They all depended on **stream environments**. Populations at **higher altitudes** were worst affected.



- **Three** of the seven severely affected frog species were only found at high altitudes and may have become **extinct**.
- The declines began in the **south** and progressively **moved north**.
- The cause of the catastrophe has been identified as the **chytrid fungus** disease.
- The Northern Tinkerfrog *Taudactylus rheophilus* was found on four separate mountaintops above 900m from the **Bellenden Ker Range to Thornton Peak**. Declines occurred in the early 1990s, but two small populations have been located.
- The Waterfall Frog *Litoria nannotis* was found near **waterfalls** and cascades in rainforest streams, from the foothills to the highest peaks throughout the Wet Tropics. Populations below 300m did not decline and there is evidence that a few **higher altitude sites** from which they disappeared are being **recolonised**.
- The Common Mistfrog *Litoria rheocola* is a small treefrog found near rainforest streams. It occurred from the lowlands to the uplands between Herbert River and Big Tableland near Cooktown. Populations below 400m did not decline, and there are now a few sites in the uplands where this species appears to be **recolonising**.
- The Australian Lace-lid *Nyctimystes dayi* was widespread throughout rainforest streams of the Wet Tropics. Populations declined in the **uplands**, but not below 400m.
- The Beautiful Nursery Frog *Cophixalis concinnus* has only ever been found on Thornton Peak **above 1000m**.



*Rock-haunting  
Black Mountain Frog*

### **Possibly extinct?**

- The **Little Waterfall Frog** *Litoria lorica* was only found streams above 600m altitude in the Thornton Peak and adjacent McDowell Range. Despite thorough searches, it has not been seen since 1991 and could possibly be extinct. This frog has never even been photographed.
- The **Mountain Mistfrog** *Litoria nyakalensis* was once found in rapids and cascades in streams above 400m between the Kirrama and McDowell Ranges. Declines occurred in the early 1990s and the species has not been seen since, and is possibly extinct.
- The **Sharp-snouted Dayfrog** *Taudactylus acutirostris* was commonly found along streams in rainforest areas above 300m from the **Herbert Valley to Big Tableland** south of Cooktown. The last known population crashed in late **1993** and no populations have been located since.