



Crucifix Frog



This odd-looking frog is found in the black soil plains areas and semi-arid grasslands of New South Wales and Queensland where it burrows into soil to wait for the infrequent summer and autumn rains. Males call for females while floating spread-eagled in temporary pools. The call is a drawn out 'Hoooooooooo.'

Standard Common Name

Crucifix Frog (Toad)

Alternative Name/s

Crucifix Toad, Holy Cross Frog, Cross Frog, Catholic Frog

Identification

A medium-sized frog with a round body and relatively short limbs and large eyes. This species is easily identified by its lime green or lemon yellow skin covered with a pattern of dark spots resembling a cross.

Size range

Between 4.5-6.5cm long

Habitat

Black soil plains, floodplains, clay pans and semi-arid grasslands.

Distribution

This species is found in the semi-arid region of the Murray-Darling Basin within central New-South Wales and south-central Queensland, west of the Great Dividing Range generally associated with floodplains and clay pans.

Seasonality

This species is only active after periods of high rainfall in the warmer months of the year.

Feeding and Diet

This species of frog feeds mainly on ants and termites.

Other behaviours and adaptations

The Crucifix Frog is one of the few species of Australian frogs which has skin patterning that does not provide camouflage, but instead acts as a vivid warning against predation. It is not clear whether the pattern is intended to warn against a poison, or bad taste that the animal may possess, however the species and its relatives does also have glands that secrete a glue-like substance which may act as a deterrent against predators such as snakes and birds.

Captive individuals have been observed, when fed crickets, to wiggle the tips of the toes in a manner which readily attracts attention of the prey, this is known as 'Pedal Luring'. Pedal Luring has also been recorded in some species of frogs such as the Horned Frog; *Ceratophrys calcarata*, from South America.

Life cycle

After sufficient rain has soaked the ground they immerse and find temporary pools where males call for the females and mating takes place. After hatching from eggs, the tadpoles grow into small frogs fast before the grasslands they inhabit dry out.

The males then seek out the waterfilled depressions, claypans and waterholes and float with their legs extended and produce a very 'owl-like' 'hooo' call. The females lay their eggs in these ponds and the tadpoles must develop within a couple of weeks before the water dries up and they perish. Being able to eat ants is a great advantage to them as the tiny metamorph Crucifix Frogs can feed both night and day on an abundant food supply ignored by most other frog species in the area.

Predators, Parasites and Diseases

Very few animals are known to feed on Crucifix Frogs or their tadpoles.

Conservation Status (IUCN): LEAST CONCERN (LC)

Danger to humans and first aid

It is recommended that if you make contact with these frogs you are careful NOT to wipe your eyes before washing your hands. A few scientists have recorded painful stinging and headaches when they forgot to do this!

Classification

Species:	<i>bennettii</i>	Class:	Amphibia
Genus:	<i>Notaden</i>	Subphylum:	Vertebrata
Family:	Myobatrachidae	Phylum:	Chordata
Order:	Anura		

