Green and Golden Bell Frog

Litoria aurea

Endangered in NSW

Vulnerable nationally



Photo © Peter Rowland

SIZE
Up to 10 cm, one of our largest frogs

HOME
Swamps, large dams and lagoons with reeds

EGGS
About 5,000 a clutch; tadpoles take 12 weeks to change

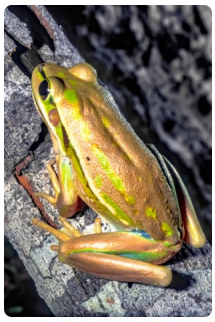
CALL
A single, drawn-out waaark, mostly after rain

A local story

Bell frogs were once common along the NSW coast, but have vanished from more than 90% of their former range. Shellharbour once had a large population. Today a key Illawarra population survives in ponds and drains around the Port Kembla steelworks, and at Sydney Olympic Park the frogs stopped an Olympic tennis centre from being built.

The climate connection

A disease called chytrid fungus caused most of the decline. Bell frogs now survive mainly near the coast, where slightly salty water helps protect them from it. Climate change squeezes them from both sides: longer droughts dry out breeding ponds, while rising seas can make coastal wetlands too salty.



Green, gold or both?

Most bell frogs are gold with large green blotches, but some are almost all green (above) or almost all gold (left). A frog's colour also changes with how warm it is, and it is brightest at its preferred body temperature.

Photos © Peter Rowland

WONDER QUESTION

Why might a frog choose to live in an old brick pit, or beside a steelworks?

Turn over for teacher notes

Teacher notes

Curriculum links (new NSW syllabuses, 2026 to 2027)

Stage	Outcome	Where the bell frog fits
Early Stage 1	STe-SCI-01 (S&T K–6)	How living things get air, water and energy to survive
Stage 2	ST2-SCI-01 (S&T K–6)	Habitat, ecosystem and environment; food chains
Stage 3	ST3-SCI-01 (S&T K–6)	Structural and behavioural adaptations; sustainable practices
Stage 4 (Year 8)	SC4-LIV-01 Living systems	Ecosystems and the interactions within them
Stage 5 (Year 9)	SC5-ENV-01 Environmental sustainability	Effects of climate change on ecosystems and the water cycle
Year 11 to 12	BI-12-03 Biology 11–12	Changes in ecosystems and biodiversity conservation; chytrid fits the Diseases focus area

In the classroom

K–2

Life cycle and call

Sequence egg, tadpole, froglet and frog cards. One clutch holds about 5,000 eggs, and tadpoles can reach 8 cm, so measure one out with a ruler. Play the call from FrogID and ask: what does it sound like to you?

YEARS 3–6

Design a frog-friendly pond

List what a bell frog needs: sunny banks to bask on, reeds for shelter, shallow edges and no predatory fish. Students design a schoolyard pond and explain how each feature helps the frog survive.

YEARS 7–12

Salt versus fungus

In a University of Newcastle trial, adding a little pool salt to ponds raised the survival of released bell frogs by 70%. Students evaluate the idea: what could go wrong as droughts and rising seas change salinity?

Get outside

Record frog calls at school or home with the free FrogID app from the Australian Museum. Visit a local wetland, or the Brickpit Ring Walk at Sydney Olympic Park. Join a local Landcare or Bushcare group.

First Nations perspectives

Through your local AECG or Land Council, invite knowledge holders to share Dharawal or Yuin understanding of frogs, wetlands and seasons. *[Local name and story, added with permission]*

Hope and action

Bell frogs move into new ponds quickly, so building habitat works. Wetlands created for them near Newcastle saw rapid population growth. Small things students and schools can do:

- Plant reeds and keep sunny banks around school ponds
- Never move frogs or tadpoles between ponds, as it spreads chytrid
- Never release aquarium fish into ponds or creeks
- Keep pet cats inside, especially at night

Talking tip: lead with wonder and action rather than loss. The bell frog shows that people can turn things around.

Scan for the full fact sheet: prpw.com.au/project/green-and-golden-bell-frog

Words and photos: Peter Rowland · *Wonder through nature* · Version 1.0, November 2026

Sources: Eipper and Rowland, A Naturalist's Guide to the Frogs of Australia; NSW BioNet threatened species profile; Australian Museum; Clulow et al. 2018, Journal of Applied Ecology; Sydney Olympic Park Authority. Check curriculum links at curriculum.nsw.edu.au.