

SWAMPS, RIVERS & RANGES SPRING UPDATE 2025

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

- We have been collating and analysing our collective bird survey data from Winter - see summary from Richard on Page 2.
- We have been planning events and opportunities for delivery across the end of 2025 - see the events section.
- We have been developing some future projects around threatened species and Landscape approaches.
- After some technical failures we are in the process of rebuilding our website and looking forward to having this updated very soon.
- We held our emerging threats event online in August which was quoted as “a must watch for every property owner” looking at what pest and weeds might become the biggest issues for the North East in a changing climate - we will be adding the video for this to our website following its rebuild (currently taking place).



Blackberry

- We held our Wildlife tales event in August - sharing stories about interactions with wildlife and leaning about the clear benefits spending time in natural environments has.
- We attending and presented at the Northern Rivers Round up, collaborating with our facilitation colleagues from Landcare.

We've been asked to present a series of frog talks to various groups around the region - learn some more about our favourite frog on page 3.

Photo Sophie Enders



We are always interested in hearing what type of events and projects you would like to see in our region, or if you'd like to get involved please let us know.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Spring Surveys

Conducted across November, if you need a group or site to join in with or any support please get in touch. Each newsletter we provide a brief summary of observations made during the previous season (See page 2). We are particularly looking for volunteers in the Greta/ Glenrowan area (see event below)- Big thanks to those who have been helping.



Bird survey morning

November, Glenrowan

We will again have a supported birding session leaving from Green's reserve near Glenrowan. Sturdy shoes required. Please get in contact if you'd like to join this morning and exact details will be provided.

Conservation IS Caring for Country

26th October, 2025, Wangaratta

A discussion on the synergy between Indigenous traditional knowledge in caring for country and conservation techniques for our Riparian area, floodplains and wetlands. Speakers Jiarra Atkinson and Sophie Enders.

<https://www.trybooking.com/DFYSE>

What bird is that? & Warby's survey

9th November, 2025, Warby-Ovens NP

Guided walk with Richard Loyn discussing bird ID, morning tea then get involved in helping with some bird surveys.

<https://www.trybooking.com/DDPHY>

Summer bird surveys in February

Did you know you can become a member of Swamps, Rivers & Ranges? Membership is just \$33 for three years and will help us to continue telling you about our projects and generate information to better manage our landscapes for the benefits of wildlife and people. Get in touch to sign up!

Please contact our project coordinator, Sophie Enders (swampsriversranges@gmail.com) for membership forms or further information on any of these activities. You can also visit our website for more information

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BIRD SURVEYS

Spring surveys are conducted throughout November

Bird summary from Richard Loyn:

Many thanks to all who submitted winter counts. Once again, Swift Parrots were a major excitement, with small flocks of this endangered species found at the well-known major habitats (Chiltern and Warby-Killawarra) and at lesser-known sites elsewhere, including 15 birds feeding on lerps at one of our survey sites at Greta. These birds were still there in July when an extraordinary concentration of Swift Parrots (600+) was reported near Bendigo. This makes us wonder if the current population estimate of <1000 birds may be too low, as the birds can easily be overlooked and many small patches of potential habitat are rarely visited by experienced birders, throughout the wintering range (Vic, NSW, ACT, SE Qld & occasionally SA).

The birds at Greta put on a great display for the survey team as they were feeding low in the red gum foliage, which carried a dense crop of psyllids with their associated lerps and honeydew. The flock at Everton did not stay as long this year, and it is tempting to speculate that may have joined the Bendigo flock. Many of our observations point to the importance of psyllids in the winter diet of Swift Parrots, in contrast to lorikeets which depend more strongly on nectar from flowering eucalypts.



The surveys also revealed good numbers of Grey-crowned Babblers (29), Gang-gang Cockatoos (25) and Black-chinned Honeyeaters (14), and other woodland species of conservation interest.

No Apostlebirds were found at the usual sites in Boorhaman, and this is the second round of surveys on which they were not found.

This winter there were few records of wintering “summer visitors”, with just one Rufous Whistler (Boorhaman) and two Dusky Woodswallows reported from formal surveys.

Most summer visitors have arrived this spring (including Painted Honeyeaters) and the last few are expected soon (e.g. Satin and Leaden Flycatchers).

Regent Honeyeaters have been reported from two locations. The Australian Bustard remained over winter near Benalla.



Winter surveys were completed at 63 sites, with an average of 53.4 birds per survey (44.6 onsite, 8.8 offsite). Of the 3366 birds observed (88 species), 3147 were land birds (76 species) and 219 were waterbirds (12 species).

The average number of species observed per survey was 13.9 (11.3 onsite, 2.6 offsite). Some remarkable concentrations of birds were found at some sites, e.g. 250 Pied Currawongs at Boorhaman 5; 40 Little Corellas and 40 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos at Boorhaman 1, and 26 Eastern Rosellas at Killawarra T1.



We look forward to seeing results of the spring counts, and hearing about unusual birds you may see at any time.

Photo credits Richard Loyn

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Growling Grass Frog *Litoria raniformis*

Also known as the Southern Bell frog this is one of Australia's largest species of frogs growing up to 10cm long. Growlers are 'sit-and-wait' predators, feeding on a wide range of insects, small lizards, fish, tadpoles and other frogs.

This frog is listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act (National) and the IUCN (international) and the FFG Act (Victoria). Threats to this species including Chytrid, habitat destruction and predation by introduced fish species among others.

The GGF can be heard making its distinctive growling call from September through to January during their breeding season. But spend the cooler months overwintering in brumation (a period of reduced activity or torpor).

While you are now unlikely to come across this frog in the North East Victoria, it was historically widespread across most of Victoria. We are part of the project to re-wild this species back into the Winton Wetlands landscape.



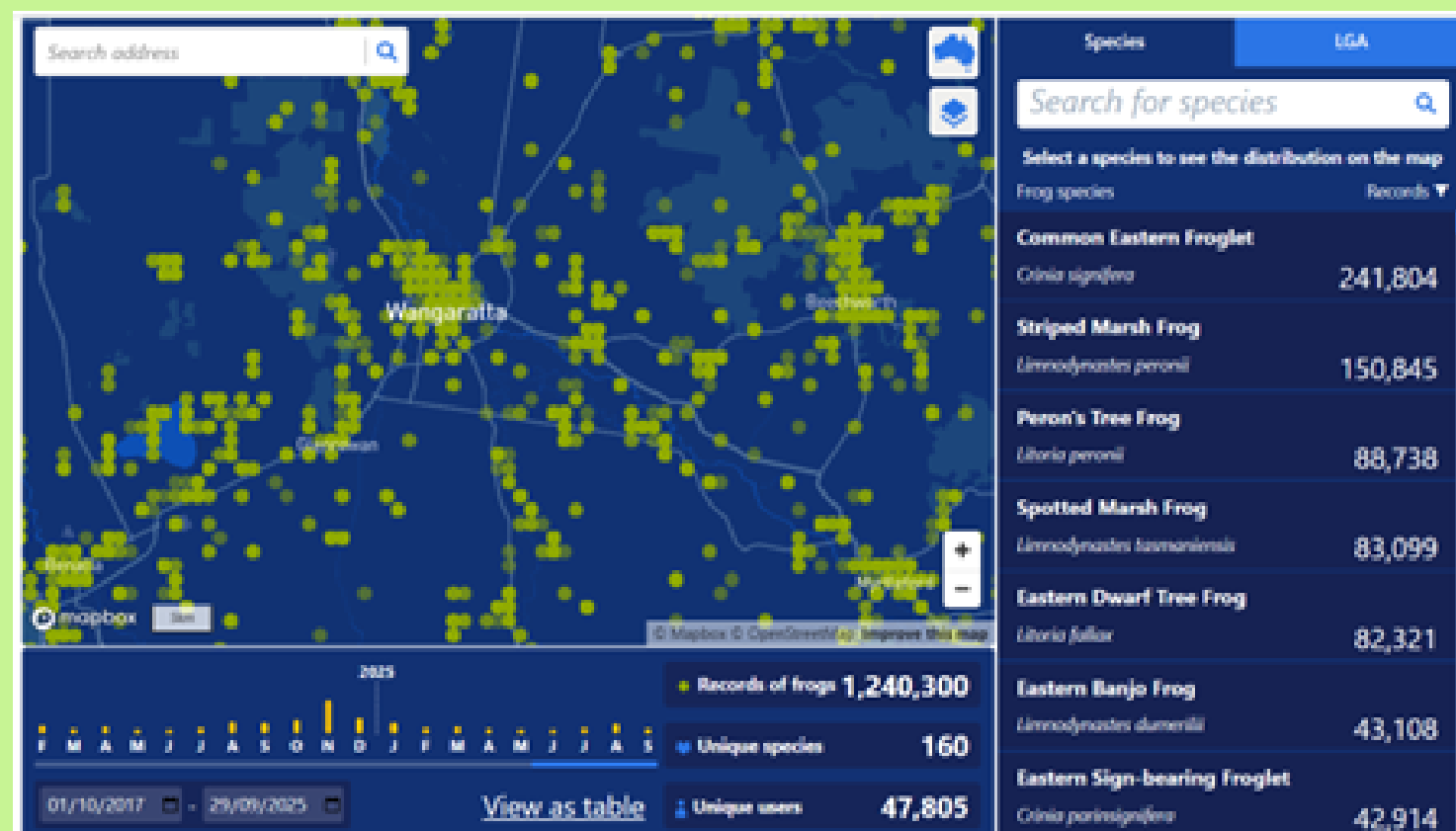
Photo: Sophie Enders

You can hear the call for this species, learn more about other frog species and record frog observations using the frog ID app - <https://www.frogid.net.au/frogs/litoria-raniformis>

We've been keeping up to date with the evolving situation regarding the **H5N1 Avian influenza**. H5N1 is an avian influenza strain not yet in Australia but globally has resulted in mass mortality events for birds and other susceptible mammals.

There are concerns that it will reach Australia in the next few migratory seasons but there is a body of work occurring behind the scenes as to monitoring its potential arrival and what response measures might look like - you can learn more and stay up to date here:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu>



Frog ID App

<https://www.frogid.net.au/>

As ecologist and citizen scientists apps can be a helpful tool in assisting us to record species and to learn which species may be found in certain locations. The frog ID app is a great example of one such tool.

You don't need an account to look up common sightings in your local area as can be seen in the image above with the most common sightings for a selected map selection.

It is very straight forward to create an account which you can access via the app or online to then record your own sightings.

On a very sad note, we were shocked to hear that Richard's friend and colleague Keith Cherry had died.

He made a great contribution to our SRR bushfire research program, working with Jim Blackney to survey nocturnal fauna on 40 sites burnt to different degrees by the Carboor-Abbeyard fires of 2019-20. We plan to publish this work soon.

Richard also enjoyed working with Keith at ARI for many years, along with others including Ed McNabb (renowned for his passion for owls and nocturnal fauna), who very sadly died earlier this year. Both were superb naturalists and they will be missed.

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