



A RE-EVALUATION OF THE SKELETAL ABNORMALITIES
IN FROGS IN THE ADELAIDE HILLS REGION

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Adelaide
for the Degree of Master of Science.

October 2000

Contents

Abstract	iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Section One – Field Survey	
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Disease	1
1.2 Habitat Degradation	2
1.3 Global Warming	2
1.4 Ultraviolet Radiation	3
1.5 Pollution	3
1.6 Aims	7
2. Materials and Methods	8
2.1 Collection Sites	9
2.2 Collecting Methods	10
2.3 Fixation, Preservation and Storage	11
2.4 Examination and Alizarin Preparation	12
2.5 Deformity Classification	12
2.6 Statistical Analysis	14
3. Results	15
3.1 Catalogue of Deformities	15
3.2 Collection Summary	62
3.3 Statistical Analysis	70
4. Discussion	73
4.1 Abnormalities	73
4.2 Brooks 1979	74
4.3 Injuries	75
4.4 Recent Discoveries of Abnormal Frogs	75

Section Two – Toxicological Research

5. Cavan – Background	77
5.1 Survey Summary	78
6. Impromptu Spawning	80
6.1 Methods	80
6.2 Results	80
6.3 Discussion	82
7. Sediment Bioassay 1 – Collected Sediment	83
7.1 Methods	83
7.2 Results	84
7.3 Discussion	91
8. Sediment Bioassay 2 – Prepared Sediment	92
8.1 Methods	92
8.2 Results	93
8.3 Discussion	105
9. Conclusions	109
9.1 Incidence of Abnormality	109
9.2 Parasites and Cysts	110
9.3 Injuries	110
9.4 Future Directions	111
10. Appendix 1 – Metamorphosis of frogs from Impromptu Cavan spawning	112
11. Appendix 2 – Preparation of Moderately Hard Synthetic Freshwater	115
12. Appendix 3 – Sediment Bioassay 1 metamorphs	116
13. Appendix 4 – Sediment Bioassay 2 metamorphs	117
14. Appendix 5 – Presence of cysts in deformed frogs collected during the field survey	121
15. References	122

Abstract

This study has shown that abnormal frogs representing ten species can be found in a range of habitats in the Mt Lofty Ranges, Flinders Ranges and the South East of South Australia. There was no significant difference in the incidence of abnormality between the Flinders Ranges, which has little or no pollution, and the Mt Lofty Ranges. However incidence of abnormality in frogs is associated with land use in the Mt Lofty Ranges.

The incidence of injury in frogs was much higher than has generally been reported but was similar to the study of Brooks (1979). Incidence of injury did not vary significantly between different land use areas or geographic regions.

Most sites within the Adelaide Hills and surrounds had low levels of abnormality but an exception was high levels in two species at a pond in an industrial area. Further investigation found that the levels of various heavy metals in the sediment were above those considered desirableⁱⁿ freshwater systems.

Eggs that were laid by frogs collected from the polluted site and reared under laboratory conditions produced very low levels of abnormal frogs, well within allowable limits. This observation suggests that pollutants are not accumulated and transferred to successive generations. Abnormal frogs collected from the same location did not successfully reproduce.

There was a reduction in the survival of tadpoles reared in sediment collected from the polluted site, but no difference in survival was detected when tadpoles were reared in artificial sediment that had similar heavy metal levels. There was however an increase in developmental problems with increasing metal concentration:

- *Crinia signifera* took longer to reach metamorphosis.
- *Litoria ewingi* also took longer to metamorphose and furthermore attained a larger size at metamorphosis.

Although no statistical analyses could be undertaken there appeared to be an increase in the incidence of abnormality in the polluted aquaria, but the rate of abnormality was lower than that recorded in the wild. Therefore, despite the fact that these metals can have a significant effect on growth and development, they are not solely responsible for the high incidence of abnormality in the field.

Declaration

This work contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge no material previously published or written by another person has been included, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

27/10/2000

Acknowledgments

I particularly wish to thank my supervisor, Assoc/Prof. Michael Tyler, for stimulating my enthusiasm and giving support during the course of this study and for criticism of this manuscript during its preparation.

I would like to thank all of the people who assisted me during the field survey; principally Alison Beck, Brydie Hill, Colin Bailey and David Gooding. Members of the South Australian Frog and Tadpole Study Group, and the South Australian Herpetology Group also provided assistance in the field.

Lynn Joosen was also extremely valuable in obtaining the support of numerous landholders in the Mt Lofty Ranges. I very much appreciate her efforts and enthusiasm. Sincere thanks are expressed to those who gave me access to their property.

Thanks to Ben Smith for assistance with the toxicology experiments and looking after animals while I was away.

I would like to show my appreciation to Dr Margaret Davies who reviewed the manuscript during its early stages. The quality of the text has improved as a result of her suggestions.

Dr Keith Walker gave considerable assistance in solving statistics problems, I am sincerely grateful to him.

Mr Phil Kempster's advice and help with photography is much appreciated.

Salisbury Council provided funds for the analysis of sediment during the toxicology experiments. For this I am most grateful.

I would especially like to thank Melissa Bradbury for her support and assistance during the study, and for keeping me sane, well almost!