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SAVE OUR FROGS

In recent times, frog populations in New Zealand have suffered serious decline. This rapid disappearance is caused by habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, UV radiation, predators and disease, overexploitation of frogs and the pet trade. Here are some tips on how you can help.

Hygiene protocol: clean your boots

Viral, bacterial and fungal diseases have been reported as a major cause of decline for many species. A recent outbreak of the chytrid fungus was suspected to have caused a mass die out of Archey's frog in the Coromandel. Archey's frog is now listed as Nationally Critical, and steps are in place to prevent its extinction.

It is very important that we try to limit the spread of any potential diseases caused by organisms like the chytrid fungus. It is best to make sure you thoroughly clean your tramping gear (boots, trousers, tents, etc) between sites. If you are likely to be walking through a known frog area it is a good idea to sterilise your boots with a fungicide like Virkon or Trigene.

Herbicides: frog friendly gardening

Because they have semi-permeable skin, frogs are particularly vulnerable to pollutants and other environmental

stresses. This means frogs are a kind of biomonitor, acting as an early warning system for the quality of the environment and potential threats to other animals, including humans.

Recent reports on the deadly effects of several herbicides and pesticides on frog species have shown that commonly used herbicides in New Zealand are fatal to adult terrestrial frogs and tadpoles. Try to use natural alternatives wherever possible.

Biosecurity: keeping foreign frogs out

Every year, a large number of amphibians are accidentally imported into New Zealand amongst freight or cargo (such as bananas from Ecuador or building materials from Australia). These may seem like harmless visitors but they can actually do a lot of damage, especially because they could be carrying lethal frog diseases. Many species of frogs also have the potential for colonising New Zealand and eating our native species. It is very important for people to be vigilant and

report any sightings of unusual frogs to MAF.

Keeping frogs as pets

Frogs make particularly good pets, but like any other pet they are your responsibility for the length of their natural lives. This may be for 15 years or more for introduced frogs! It is illegal to catch or keep native frogs. It is very important that you do not move frogs around the country. Catching tadpoles in one pond and later releasing them in another can do serious damage. If you have to release your frog back into the wild, they must be returned to the pond from which they were originally caught. This will also limit the spread of frog diseases caused by the chytrid fungus, as over 30% of introduced frogs carry this disease, which is harmless to humans.

Useful websites

<http://www.nzfrogs.org/>
<http://www.open.ac.uk/daptf/froglog/Froglog70.pdf>
<http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/aw/declines/declines.html>