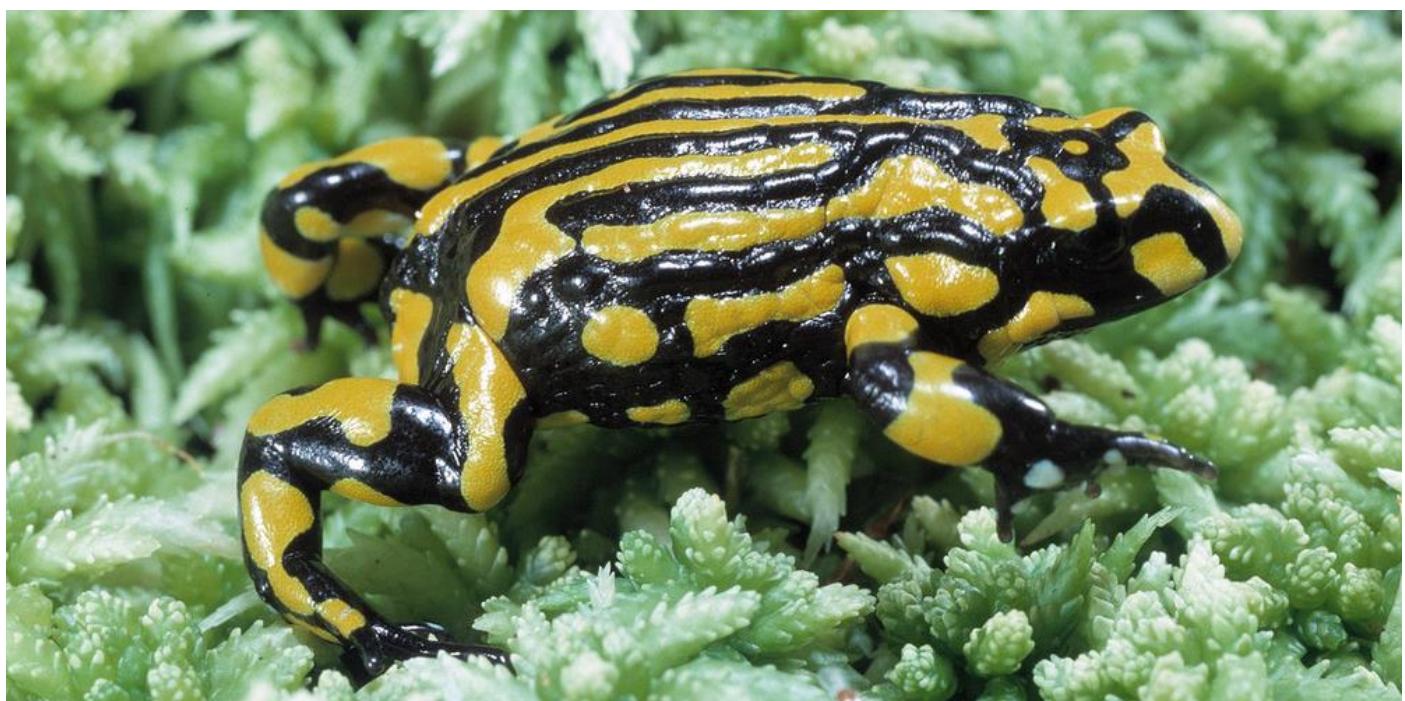


# A National Recovery Program brings hope to Corroboree Frogs

Charlie Year 2

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**The future for Corroboree Frogs is looking up as a National Recovery Plan to save these tiny black and yellow amphibians works its magic.**



Taronga Zoo's captive breeding program is helping Corroboree Frogs to make a comeback in the wild. Photograph: Lorinda Taylor

In recent years, Australia's endangered Corroboree Frog has received national protection as their numbers continued to decline. As a result, a National Recovery Plan was put in place to ensure the Corroboree Frog's long term survival. "The recovery plan, basically spells out what needs to be done for the conservation program for the Corroboree Frog and that ranges from everything from research questions... captive breeding and also community engagement," said David Hunter from the Office of Environment and Heritage.

At Taronga Zoo, the keepers have implemented a successful captive breeding program for the little Corroboree Frogs. "The captive breeding program has been established to maintain sufficient numbers and genetic diversity so that we can keep the Corroboree Frog alive in captivity and healthy in captivity for at least 50 years," said David Hunter.

To ensure the survival of the captive bred Corroboree Frogs, the released creatures are placed in artificial frog ponds in the Kosciusko National Park. They are like secret enclosures hidden in the wild. "We have ponds in the wild that we put the eggs in and they protect the Corroboree Frog tadpoles from becoming infected because the Common Eastern Froglet can't get in the pond," said David. The frog ponds also protect the eggs and the tadpoles from pool drying because they can regulate the water level in the pool by topping it up.

According to David, the location of the frog ponds is kept secret to prevent people interfering with the frogs. "If someone went there and tampered with the apparatus or went in to the enclosure and breeched our quarantine they could make all the frogs very sick," David said. Therefore keeping it secret is the best way to keep the frogs alive and safe in the wild.

Everyone wants to protect these frogs, but unfortunately no one has yet found a cure. "Creating a cure for the fungus is one of those very detailed, tricky bits of research that you never really know when you're going to get there. It might be five years, it might be 15, and it might be 25 years. We don't really know but the good thing is we can feel confident... that eventually we will find the cure," David said.



Captive bred Corroboree Frogs are released into artificial frog ponds. Photograph: Charlie

Corroboree Frogs are endangered mainly because of the Chytrid Fungi. "We believe the fungus first came into Australia during the late 1970s," David said. Experts believe the fungus found its way into the Corroboree Frog habitat during the mid-1980s. "When the disease arrived the population crashed," said Michael McFadden, a zoo keeper at Taronga Zoo. The fungus is 100% fatal as it affects the most important part of their body, the skin. "The Chytrid Fungus, what it does is it affects the skin of the Corroboree Frog and skin to the Corroboree Frog is very important. The skin on the frog is like the inside of our mouths, it's a mucus membrane and it performs a whole lot of functions for the frog including breathing and when that

skin is disrupted a frog gets sick. The fungus builds up the infection level on the skin and it prevents the frog from being able to maintain its electrolytes. It causes the frog to have a cardiac arrest," said Michael McFadden, a zoo keeper at Taronga Zoo.

Climate change also affects the Corroboree Frogs. The frogs prefer cold temperatures; however, global warming is resulting in warmer climates. During periods of droughts the pools would dry faster, preventing the tadpoles from developing into little frogs. In addition to that, climate change might result in more frequent wildfires in the high country. "There's the possibility that more frequent wildfires would change the structure of the swampy bogs that the Corroboree Frog likes to breed in and make it no longer suitable for the frogs," said David.



Insert caption. Photograph: Lorinda Taylor

Feral pigs also pose a risk to these frogs. According to David destroy the breeding area of Corroboree Frogs. "They like to root up the ground. They basically turn the ground over and so that then damages the habitat that the frogs need," David said. To prevent feral pigs from destroying frog habitats a program in trapping and shooting has begun.

The introduction of the National Recovery Plan has proven to be quite successful. Between the captive breeding programs, the reintroduction into the wild of the Koziosko National Park and the ongoing research, Corroboree Frog's long term survival is looking up. "The species is almost extinct but we are starting to get frogs back at our reintroduction sites," said Michael.