

A SUNBAKING FROG.



This tree frog is appearing in some gardens at the moment, including mine. It might be seen basking on a log or a rock beside a pond or a water feature; it loves to sunbake. In fact, it is the only Tasmanian frog which can be seen 'basking' out of water. It has keen eyesight in daylight and as it is approached it will jump into the water with a distinctive 'plop'. This is often the only way to know it is there. At night under torchlight, it can be approached with relative ease.

The frog has a couple of common names – possibly known best by the Green and Gold Bell Frog, some of its other common names are the Southern Bell Frog and the Growling Grass Frog.

After I entered an observation of *Litoria raniformis* on iNaturalist, two frog specialists informed me the name had changed to *Ranoidea raniformis*.

Ryan Francis made this comment "Yes, although it isn't really accepted in the community. The genus *Litoria* is made up of several different genera, the work that raised *Ranoidea* left out a lot of the other valid genera, I am quite sure that *raniformis* will in fact end up in another

genera, hence why it hasn't had a strong uptake by the scientific community. There is also recent publication that recognised the tasmanian raniformis as a distinct subspecies, *R. raniformis major*, with the possibility of being elevated to species."

Meanwhile, it is still commonly referred to as *Litoria raniformis*.

Despite its name green and gold frog, its colouration varies greatly. However, all adults do have a pale green stripe down the middle of the back and turquoise thighs.



Another common name, not mentioned before, is the warty swamp frog.

The green and gold frog is quite large, measuring up to 9.5 centimeters from snout to vent. Its tadpoles can be 9.5 cm long also. They often have a coppery pigment along their sides and an iridescent green sheen along their backbones.

You might hear the male calling between August and April when it makes a short grunting '*crok-crok*' followed by a growling '*craw-craw-craw*'. This is often triggered by local flooding and a rise in water levels. Green and Gold frogs spend most of their time in the water, and stay close to permanent ponds, lagoons, dams and lakes. Once the sun goes down, they get ready to feed on beetles, water snails, lizards, snakes, fish, small frogs or other small animals. Yes, small frogs!! They have been observed feeding on frogs of their own species. I'm not sure how much chance there is for the progeny of my local frogs to reproduce as laboratory studies have indicated that tadpoles and young frogs won't survive in temperatures under 15°C

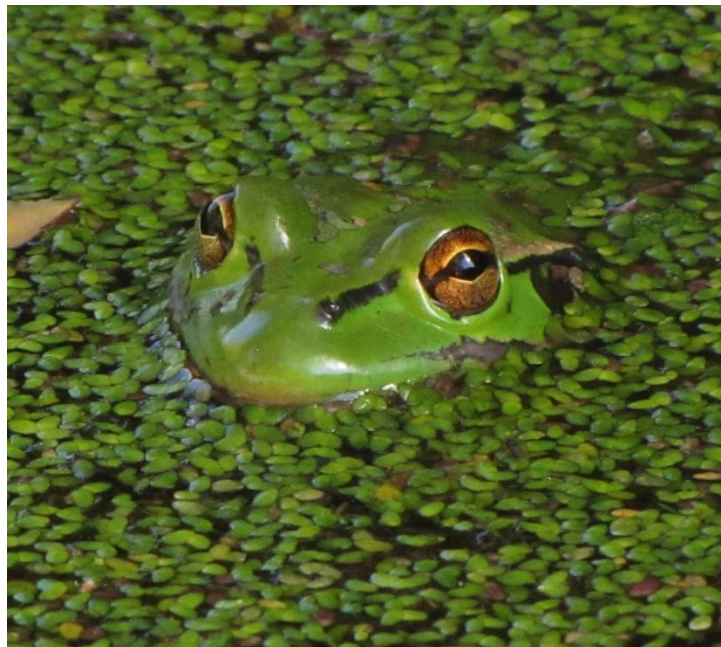
This species is described as being a 'sit-and-wait' predator, that is, they do not actively hunt for food but rather sit and wait for prey to move into

feeding range. It seems to me that when they are basking, they seem to be in a sort of torpor. Almost every day, whichever water pond they are beside, I can move in close to photograph them without them hopping away.

You can provide a home for Green and Gold Frogs by placing logs, branches and rocks around ponds for them to sun themselves on or shelter under if the water level drops. Plant appropriate sedges, reeds and other semi-aquatic plants so that Green and Gold frogs have a safe place to lay their eggs. Avoid introducing fish such as Goldfish and Gambusia into your pond if you're trying to attract frogs. These species prey on tadpoles.

Numbers are in decline in southern Tasmania, but these frogs can be seen around dams with dense reedy edges, swamps, lakes and lagoons in northern Tasmania. One of the nearby locations where it is commonly seen is Blackman's Lagoon in the Waterhouse Conservation Area.

The green and gold frog is listed as Vulnerable in Tasmania. (Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 (Tasmania November 2021 list)



Listen to their sound <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLRilbTnIBY>

