



## Crucifix Frog, Holy Cross Toad *Notaden bennettii*

**What do they look like?** They are chubby frogs with short limbs and grow to about 50 mm long. They are yellow with a pebbled cross of black, red and white spots on the back, and a white belly. They have a distinctly down-turned mouth, giving them a 'grumpy' appearance.

**Where do they live?** They live in woodlands on sandy soils that hold water and are seasonally inundated. Areas with clay pans are also favoured.

**What do they need to live, eat and breed?** Crucifix Frogs spend most of their lives inactive, as much as one metre underground. During periods of high rainfall, they emerge to feed on ants and termites and to breed, laying their eggs on the surface of temporary swamps, billabongs and inundated clay pans. As this habitat dries, they burrow back into the soil.

**When might I see (or hear) them?** Crucifix Frogs are easily detected by their calls – on warm humid nights, particularly after summer rains their rising owl-like 'wooo' can carry for kilometres. They sometimes feed around lights on homestead lawns.

**What management actions affect this species?** Changing water flow (damming or draining wetlands) is likely to cause declines, as is soil compaction around wetlands through cattle congregation. Digging out low-lying areas for dams and clearing over storey trees and ground cover will reduce water retention and infiltration thus reducing breeding habitat. Pigs are likely to kill the frogs and destroy their habitat so controlling these pests may help Crucifix Frogs. Maintaining native grasses and minimising disturbance to temporary flooding areas is probably the best way to encourage these frogs.

**How do they benefit the land I manage?** Burrows made by soil fauna like these frogs aerate and mix soil and are important for nutrient flow and water infiltration. As one of many animals that feed on ants and termites, especially at times when these insects are breeding, they help to control insect numbers and return nutrients back to the soil.

**Similar species:** Northern Spadefoot Frog (*Notaden melanoscapus*),  
Ornate Burrowing Frog (*Limnodynastes ornatus*).

