

## Recovery of the Giant barred frog in the upper Mary River catchment

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There is no excitement quite like finding something that was lost! Two frog outings along Obi Obi Creek in Maleny in February were cause to exclaim out loud and get some snaps of a waterway star; the Giant barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*). This stream dependant frog has recently been downgraded from Endangered to Vulnerable under state and federal legislation, in response to updated distribution and population knowledge. The major threats for this species have been losses due to the amphibian Chytrid fungus, and habitat loss.



Picture above: Nothing quite like the smile of a contented Giant barred frog! Photo by E. Ford (MRCCC)

Aerial photography from 1958 (see images at end of document) shows widespread vegetation loss from the riparian zone of Obi Obi Creek all the way from the headwaters to Gardiner's Falls. Any riparian-loving beast would be comprehensively displaced and that seemed to be the situation for many decades. No reports of the Giant barred frogs were noted until one fine evening in 2012 when the MRCCC and Barung Landcare conducted a frog survey at the Maleny Precinct site before works began there. There we found three individuals and the excitement grew as another was observed later on Walkers Creek and downstream towards Lake Baroon. However, numerous surveys along the other sections of Obi Obi Creek from the Book Farm to

Kenilworth, over two decades could not reveal other populations. 10 years ago a survey along the Maleny Boardwalk revealed nothing.

However, over the past 25 years there has been a strong revegetation effort along the waterways of the plateau. In town the Boardwalk planting started in 1993 by Barung Landcare, and Maleny State School planted a corner in the early 2000's. The extensive Maleny Precinct revegetation began in 2014.

The MRCCC's annual Find a Frog in February event encourages people to survey waterways at night and in 2020 the first sightings of Giant barred frogs started to come in from locals. This year a large group of workshop attendees walked the Boardwalk and we held an outing for the students and teachers of Maleny State School on their grounds. At the Boardwalk we encountered 12 individuals and seven at the school, with one male calling across the creek at the Precinct. To everyone's delight males, females and juveniles were all seen. This is a majestic species; especially awe-inspiring when spotted by torch-light under the dark canopy of the night. Key to food webs and energy transfer between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, its presence is vital.

The sightings confirm that, given time, revegetated sites do bring exceptional ecological benefit through supporting processes and providing complex habitat. We calculate that, around Maleny, 20 years of growth was needed to bring this species back to living and breeding at the site. The trees are now providing a suitable microclimate (moist and cool), ground cover (leaf-litter and refuge 'furniture') and stable banks, in-stream complexity and deep pools for breeding. It is heartening to know that environmental projects taken on by all landholders, groups and agencies are making a positive difference. It takes knowledge, resources, dedication and patience.

**Maleny State School and Maleny  
Precinct and school area**





Maleny 'Boardwalk' area



1993

# Timeline series of Maleny district

