

The Living Valley



Assa darlingtoni

Pouched Frog, Hip-pocket Frog, Marsupial Frog

Assa darlingtoni – Marsupial Frog or Hip Pocket Frog

Mist, dampness and rain is what this Tweed Valley is about. Indeed, without lots of rain over millennia, there would never have been a valley at all. Water is still eroding the softer rocks of the Mt. Warning caldera down to the coast and into the Pacific Ocean. Yep -Queensland's beaches are made from N.S.W mountains. Along this journey, some curious amphibians scramble and hop in the damp verges of rainforest creeks and soaks. This ancient line of living things are said to be the first creatures on the planet to call to each other. Great mists and lots of time – change measured out by frog calls.

One such amphibian is the Hip-pocket Frog or Marsupial Frog, so named for the two pouches that the male has on his sides. The female lays eggs in the damp leaf litter of the rainforests where on hatching, the young tadpoles wriggle into the male's pouches. From now on he is a single father until the tiny, fully formed frogs emerge weeks later.

The Hip-pocket Frog appears on the Treasures of the Tweed mural with other species threatened by clearing of forests, predation by feral animals, introduced fungi and polluted air and water.

Although it is humans that have created these impacts, we also have the capacity to mitigate the damage by actions such as: regenerating rainforest, controlling weeds and feral animals and not moving foreign fungi into sensitive ecological areas. Hygiene for footwear and vehicles visiting forest would help.

Despite these threats, all of the Tweeds amphibian species are extant, though some are declining. Sadly, South-east Queensland has lost two unique frog species: the Southern Day Frog and the Gastric Brooding Frog since the 1980s. It is up to us to look after the Tweed frogs so that they do not 'fall off the wall' forever.

Find the Marsupial Frog on the Treasures of the Tweed mural.

Focus by Dominic Farnworth, edited by EarthLearning team.

*Feel free to submit ideas and observations for future Weekly nature articles. Send to dom@bewilderness.org or ring 02 66791439