

Notaden melanoscaphus

Tomio Taguchi, 2002

Common name: Northern Spadefoot toad, Golfball frog

Classification:

Class	Amphibia
Order	Anura
Family	Myobatrachidae

Distribution Range and Habitat: The north-west Kimberley of WA, northern NT, and into Cape York QLD. The population also separates to coastal plains near Townsville region QLD. (Approximate occurrence area is 772,300km²). Found at glossy open forest, sclerophyll woodland, timbered savanna and grassland on clay soil.

Description: 50mm, rounded body with small head, short snout and narrow mouth. Black, slate or pale grey dorsally with blackish or dark brown blotches between eyes and back, and white or pale on belly. Short robust legs, and tubercles on sole of unwebbed fingers and legs. Usually *Notaden* spp. spends most of its time under the ground and emerges after heavy rainfalls. Adults are carnivorous or insectivorous and nocturnal. The body of the frog puffs up when encountering a predator, and it is able to exude white and sticky latex-like substrate from pores on its back. Mating call by male frogs is a long and owl-like “Whoop-whoop” sound while floating at the water surface.

Reproductive Biology: Breeding begins after or during heavy rainfall in a shallow area, and breeding cycle completes in about 1 month. The male has to find a suitable breeding site which is at least 1m apart from neighbours and 10cm in depth, then mating is accomplished while floating. 500-1,400 dark brown chained eggs are released in submerged vegetation. Eggs, 6mm in diameter, hatch in 4 days, then new-born tadpoles attach vertically to aquatic plants. They become bright brown in colour, which results in invisibility from predators; such as fish, dragonfly larvae and other aquatic insects. Rear legs appear within 4 weeks when total body length reaches 4-5cm, and a bright brown and bronzy pink colour appears around the abdomen. The front legs appear at week 5. The tadpole feeds only during rainfall on plant materials and soft bodied aquatic insects, and it completes metamorphosis in 8 weeks. The frog then burrows and lives under the ground.

Literature cited:

“Wildlife of Tropical North Queensland”. 2000. Queensland Museum Publication.

Amphibian Website (Photo 2)

http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/amphib_query?where-genus=Notaden&where-species=melanoscaphus

JCU – Frogs of North Queensland (Photo 1)

<http://www.jcu.edu.au/school/tbiol/zoology/herp/NthQldHerps/NthQLDHerps-frogs.shtml#Myobatrachidae>

Northern Territory Frog database (Distribution Map)

<http://www.frogwatch.org.au/index.cfm?attributes.fuseaction=getDetails&id=29>