

New frog species 'hopping' into protection

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Assa wollumbin, Mount Warning. Credit: Stephen Mahony

A new frog species has been discovered in Wollumbin National Park in northern New South Wales, and is one of only two known species that store their tadpoles on their bodies.

Researchers from University of Newcastle and the South Australian Museum recently identified the species as distinct from its close relation, another 'hip-pocket' or pouched frog *Assa darlingtoni*, after genetic analysis.

Minister for Environment Matt Kean said the NSW Government took immediate action to protect the tiny frogs, declaring their habitat an Asset of Intergenerational Significance under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

"This incredible discovery shows just how much we don't know about the world around us, with this tiny 16mm frog found on just one isolated mountain in the Wollumbin National Park," Mr Kean said.

"The [small population size](#) makes this frog more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which is why the NSW Government moved quickly to protect its habitat within days of being formally described.

"A conservation action plan will be developed to ensure the survival of this fascinating frog species, which has been living undiscovered high in the cool forest."

The tiny frog population is confined to around 2000 hectares on Wollumbin Mountain (Bundjalung name for Mount Warning) in the Wollumbin National Park, and is within the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area.

The new species has been named *Assa wollumbin* sp.nov. in consultation with Aboriginal Elders of the Wollumbin Consultative Group.

University of Newcastle's Dr. Michael Mahony, one of the researchers who described the species, said it was an exciting find.

"The hip-pocket frog is not only unique for its amazing breeding biology among Australian frogs, but it is also unique among frogs of the world, since there are only four of the 4000 species worldwide that have male parental care where the male carries its developing tadpoles," Dr. Mahony said.

Assets of Intergenerational Significance are areas of exceptional value that warrant special protection and are part of our commitment to zero-extinction within NSW national parks.

The research also revealed the new species will likely meet the criteria for listing as critically endangered due to its specific habitat needs and restricted distribution.

The new [frog species](#) is described in scientific journal *Zootaxa*.

More information: Michael J. Mahony et al, A new hip-pocket frog from mid-eastern Australia (Anura: Myobatrachidae: Assa), *Zootaxa* (2021). [DOI: 10.11646/zootaxa.5057.4.1](https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5057.4.1)

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