



Toad catching! What on earth? The small article in the local paper caught my eye. Surely there can't be others who share my secret delight in roaming the streets late at night, furtively snatching toxic toads from local lawns? But there they are, in black and white, a local nature group who hold regular toad catching nights in the park around the lake just down the road from me.

To be honest, I had felt a little ashamed of my evening endeavours. As a lover of all things feathered, furry or scaly, I initially struggled with the idea of harming any creature. Although I freely admit, my reluctance does not extend to killing cockroaches. I have no qualms whatsoever about that.

Cane toads however, are closely related to one of my favourite types of creature—frogs. I love all frogs, great or small, green or brown, croaking, chirruping or even booming in my drainpipes. Unfortunately, cane toads share many traits with my beloved frogs, particularly here in Australia, where we have many native frogs that strongly resemble the imported toads, especially the brown bumpy-skinned frogs that often sit upright in the classic cane toad pose.

So how could I possibly enjoy rounding up dozens of these introduced amphibians only to pop them in my veggie crisper for a never-ending nap? After some wrestling with my conscience, I decided to accept this penchant for poaching as the expression of some inherent primal hunting instinct and focus instead on the results. And those results are undeniable! Since making a reasonable dent in the toad numbers around my local area, my backyard has become home to Green Tree Frogs, Striped Marsh Frogs, and even a couple of Northern Banjo Frogs, also known as Red-thighed Pobblebunks.

I'm proud to say that I'm now a member of the Springfield Lakes Nature Care group and have been actively involved in their toad catching events around Spring Lake for the last two years, contributing to the capture of thousands of cane toads that have then been humanely killed and donated to the University of Queensland's Cane Toad Challenge.

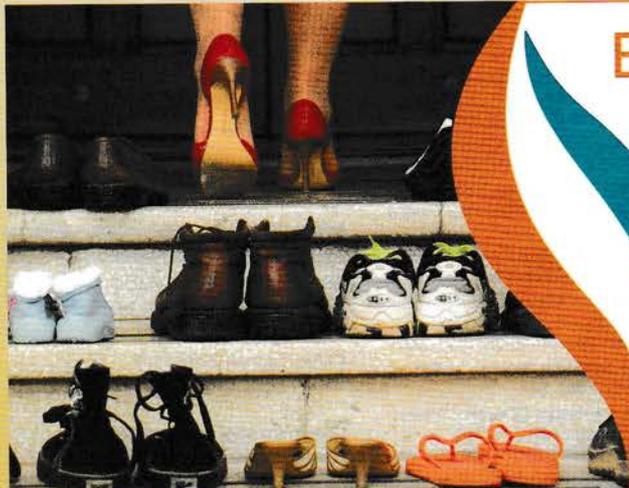
Professor Rob Capon has been working on biological techniques to control the cane toad for the last 15 years, and harvests the toxins from the toad's own glands to produce Bufo Tabs, a neat little bait to attract toadpoles into a trap, dealing with the problem at its source. These baits have been trialled at a number of sites around Queensland, and have performed spectacularly well, trapping over a million toadpoles in their first season of use.

Now I know there may be some skeptics out there who believe we're wasting our time, that a bunch of volunteers chasing down a few hundred toads every so often couldn't possibly make a difference, but I challenge them to come



by Spring Lake one evening and stop to listen to a sound that simply wasn't there a couple of years ago. It's the sound of a thousand native Eastern Sedge Frogs all calling for a mate and if you're lucky enough to actually catch a glimpse of one, you'll see that they look pretty happy indeed.

If anyone would like to join our Group, membership is free and meetings are held on the first Monday of the month, at BLVD Restaurant, Shop 1, 7 Springfield Lakes Boulevard, Springfield Lakes. You can contact us through info@SpringfieldLakesnatureCare.org.au or you can follow us on www.facebook.com/SpringfieldLakesNatureCare.



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