Welcome all, and thank you for hopping along to this art launch today.

Once upon a time, canaries were used down mine shafts. If the canary died, the men would be told to get out before suffering a similar fate. Conservationists know that frogs indicate danger in a very similar way for the environment. Worldwide, frog numbers are diminishing.

Amazingly frogs, which are amphibians have been around for at least 250 million years, and amphibians in general for over 350 million years. This means that frog species have lived through 3–THREE–different mass extinctions, including the one that killed all the dinosaurs.

Despite this incredible history of survival, frogs all around the world are now dying off in record numbers. Nearly ⅓ of amphibian species are currently threatened with extinction. They are simply unable to handle the current environmental stressors, a desperate sign that the earth is in crisis. Their ability to live on both land and water makes them more susceptible to environmental changes, because they have thin skin, which they can breathe through, when necessary. This same thin skin can also absorb toxic chemicals, radiation, and diseases, which makes them a useful indicator species for a good healthy environment, and unfortunately is also the reason for their decline.

Frogs make up about 90% of the class of Amphibians, and the good news is, if there are lots of frogs in an area, it means the ecosystem is healthy. This enormous frog here is placed in a most suitable location as a symbol of restoring the local natural environment. Tarrala Creek is soon to be "daylighted" meaning the creek will be brought back up to the surface, and restored as important habitat, like nature intended. Projects like this help reverse the environmental damage unwittingly done in the past, and enrich our lives with opportunities to enjoy nature's bounty.

Throughout their lifecycle, frogs have an important place in the food chain. As tadpoles, they eat algae, reducing the chances of deadly algae blooms. Frogs are also an important source of food within the food chain, birds, lizards, snakes, turtles and water rats all like to eat these little delicacies.

Amazingly frogs will also help us to grow food, since they help keep insects from wreaking havoc on crops. In the 1980s, in India, frogs were collected and exported to France as food. The subsequent drop in frogs led to an increase in insect population that ruined crops. Realizing how important frogs were to a healthy ecosystem, the Indian government finally banned the export of frogs.

The widespread death of frogs would send a catastrophic ripple through the ecosystem and compromise human health around the globe.

Frogs help keep insects from spreading diseases, such as malaria, dengue, and Ross river fever, because adult frogs eat mosquitoes, which otherwise spread these diseases. Tiny tadpoles also eat many insect larvae that make their home in pools, puddles, ditches, swamps, and other

water-filled containers, even around your home after rain, if you are lucky enough to have frogs in your garden.

From their sticky toes to their popping eyes and long sticky tongues, frogs have hopped into folklore as The Frog Prince and characters like Kermit, the delight of many generations of children. Scientists are also fascinated by frogs and are still unlocking the secrets of these mysterious creatures. Frog skin secretions, which they use to keep their skin moist, can be used as a powerful antibiotic. Some frogs produce peptides that can help heal cuts and bruises and can even heal organs after surgery.

This gigantic spotted marsh frog on magnificent display here, is thanks to the vision of the sculptor Ian Bracegirdle. It's presence here is a real environmental asset, as well as being a magnificent piece of public art, for all to enjoy. In real life, the Spotted Marsh frog is quite small, only about 4 ½ cms in length. This relatively common adaptable species is found in the eastern half of Australia and is well suited to urban environments. It is usually the first frog to colonise new dams, ditches and water-covered areas on land that has been recently disturbed.

Croydon Conservation Society is looking for interested people who like to be observant of everything around their home and close area. This is a citizen science project to collect data from all over Maroondah as evidence of what a great and healthy population of insects, birds, frogs, and fauna we are lucky to be sharing our municipality with. You don't need any special skills other than pen and paper or a phone camera, and a keen eye.

Just make contact with us through our website or facebook page and tell us your name and the approximate area you live in, whatever you can find to document from lady bird to ravens and beetles.

This data will help ensure that the State Government is fully aware of why so much of Maroondah is to be covered by an Environmentally Significant overlay, designed to protect mature trees, waterways, and bushland reserves, when looking at where next to develop extra housing. Without the supporting data, we could well soon become like any other inner urban municipalities, with just roof tops, concrete, roads, carparks and bird life consisting of only sparrows and pigeons, and definitely no frogs.

So, hop to it and give us a hand if you can please, we are waiting to hear from you.

Thanks to Maroondah Council for the invitation to participate here today.