

**MALE/MALE COMBAT IN THE WESTERN BANJO FROG,
LIMNODYNASTES DORSALIS (GRAY)**

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The following behaviour was observed at Coomalbidgup, Western Australia (33°45'S, 121°20'E) at 9.20pm on 23 May, 1982.

The male *L. dorsalis* were located 35cm apart on the edge of a shallow pond approx. 45cm diameter and to a depth of 25mm. Visual contact between them is believed to be zero due to the close formation of the grasses growing in and around the water. This suggests audible contact only during the initial stages of the observed behaviour.

Both frogs were calling, occasionally in unison but more often alternately, from the perimeter of the pool. At some indeterminable signal the pair simultaneously moved towards each other and also to the less vegetated central part of the pond. This not only gave them a clear area for the impending struggle but allowed me an unimpaired view of this.

Contact was made from the front, head to body: the head of one passing beside the head of the other, and a pushing match commenced. When one frog managed to cause his opponent to back-pedal it would raise a forelimb beneath the other's body and attempt, often with success, to throw him onto his back. After several moves back and forth, and an occasional flip onto the back experienced by both individuals, contact would break and the contestants return to the edge of the pool and recommence calling. Then, after two or three minutes, it was back to the 'arena' for further combat.

This behaviour, calling-combat-calling was repeated several times during a 25 minute period with honours being shared equally. The end came when both frogs moved away from the pond in different directions. The size and weight of the combatants appeared to be about equal, and neither gained any obvious advantage over the other during this encounter.

After the pair had moved off I searched the area for conspecific females with no success. Male/male combat may occur when two (or more?) sexually mature males meet. The lack of females in close proximity tends to suggest that the observed encounter was competition for a prime calling site. Under different circumstances, i.e. a strong healthy male v. a deformed or weak one, the result may have been the exclusion of the latter from the pond. That both males moved away from the site suggests they each expended sufficient energy to elicit withdrawal behaviour.



Figure 1: Male *Limnodynastes dorsalis* involved in combat.