

## New frog species discovered in New York and New Jersey



US scientists have proven that even among city skyscrapers new things can be discovered when they found a new frog species in the ponds and marshes of Staten Island, mainland New York and New Jersey.

The discovery was made by researchers from Rutgers University working together with colleagues from UCLA, UC Davis and the University of Alabama.

The yet unnamed frog – which biologists historically mistook for a more widespread variety of the leopard frog – may even extend into parts of Connecticut and extreme north-eastern Pennsylvania. Researchers believe that

these are likely the same leopard frogs that completely disappeared from Long Island and other parts of the area over the last few decades.

“It is very surprising for a new species like this to have been unrecognised in this area until now,” said Rutgers doctoral candidate Jeremy Feinberg, who made the initial discovery. “Their natural limited range coupled with recent unexplained disappearances from places such as Long Island underscores the importance of this discovery and the value that conservation efforts might have in the long-term survival of this urban species.”

**Source: Rutgers University**

## Online tool helps companies address water risks

World environmental organisation WWF and German development finance institution DEG have launched a global online tool that enables companies and investors to address their water-related risks.

The practical online questionnaire not only identifies water risk in supply chains and investment portfolios, but also provides practical steps to mitigate risk.

Population growth and climate change are set to increase pressure on vital freshwater resources, with serious consequences for nature, people and economies. “Water scarcity is a concern for conservationists, communities and companies alike. But simply competing for every last drop will do no good to anyone. If water users become aware of their water risks – and work together to find solutions – we can ensure that

people, nature and businesses have the water they need,” said Jim Leape, WWF International DG.

Virtually every business sector relies on water. Yet many executives remain unaware of how water flows through their supply chains, or how the health of the environment where their facilities are located could affect long-term profitability. “Water availability is the most underestimated critical issue for the companies we are financing, but we believe that financial institutions can help make the companies more sustainable in their performance. Our work with WWF looks beyond the risks and shows practical ways how to change them into business opportunities,” said Bruno Wenn, Chairman of DEG.

**To access the tool, Visit: <http://water-riskfilter.panda.org/>**

## Value ecosystems when managing water use, UN study urges

Recognising the valuable services provided by ecosystems such as wetlands and forests – and not only focusing on water productivity in agriculture – can improve livelihoods and help meet the rising demands on the world’s water resources in a sustainable way, according to a new report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Increasing water productivity and efficiency is a key concern for policymakers in many parts of the world, especially as rising incomes and changing diets are set to increase the demand on water resources that are already under pressure.

The report, *Releasing the Pressure: Water Resource Efficiencies and Gains to Ecosystem Services*, which was produced by researchers at the Stockholm Environment Institute, urges policymakers and resource managers to shift from the traditional focus on water productivity per unit of agricultural yield (‘more crop per drop’), to a broader view of the concept, which would include ecosystem services.

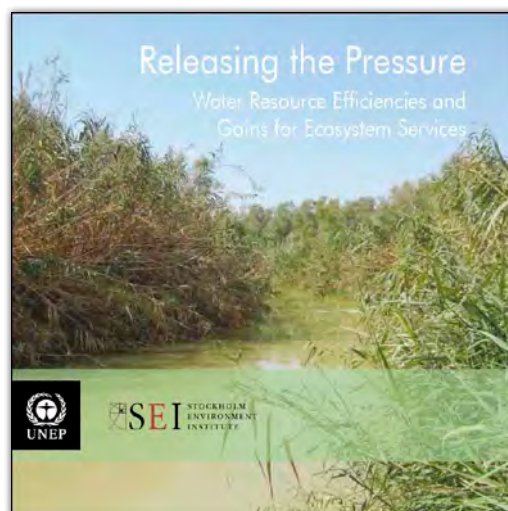
Such an approach would take into account water regulation and purification, pollination, erosion control and other ecosystem services performed by wetlands and forests. These water-dependent services, and the communities that rely on them, can be adversely affected when water is siphoned off from rivers or streams, or drained from marshes, for agricultural use.

Balancing the goals of agricultural land (agro-ecosystems) with these kinds of ecosystem services – using some of the techniques outlined in the UNEP report – can serve to improve human well-being, increase crop yields in a sustainable way and support the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and equitable Green Economy.

“Assessing water productivity narrowly, for example, by simply looking at crop, fodder and forest products – will continue to under-value the role of water for wider society and the economy,” said UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner.

“Recognising the wider benefits generated by water, for example nutrient flows, cooling, providing habitats, and other supporting and regulating ecosystem services, is the aim of our work. Water may soon be a critically restricted resource for a growing number of people. In a few months, world governments will meet for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). This report addresses an important issue for future sustainable development: how to enhance the productive and equitable use of water for multiple needs.”

• **To access the report, Visit: [www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Air-land-water-resources/sei-unep-releasing-the-pressure.pdf](http://www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Air-land-water-resources/sei-unep-releasing-the-pressure.pdf)**



## New UN agreement seeks to protect environment from hazardous electronic waste

A new United Nations agreement seeks to diminish the damage caused by electronic waste through the collection and recycling of hazardous materials, as well as by introducing measures to improve the ways in which this equipment is managed.

According to the UN Telecommunications Union (ITU), electronic waste is expected to grow exponentially, particularly in developing countries, yet only 13% of electronic waste is recycled, many times without safety procedures in place. The agreement, which was signed between ITU and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention (SBC), intends to strengthen collaboration between information and communications technology (ICT) and environmental policymakers to address this issue.

"The ICT sector is already making significant progress in improving its environmental performance and reducing e-waste through improved best practices and standards," said ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré. "The collaboration with the Secretariat of the Basel Convention will allow the global community to address this ever-increasing problem through a holistic approach, involving the recycling industry as well as environmental policy makers."

Electronic waste, which contains toxic materials used in the manufacturing process, can cause widespread damage to the environment and human health. Through the agreement, which was signed in March, ITU and SBC will exchange information and practices and will work on joint programmes and projects to set ICT standards and raise awareness among countries about electronic waste management.

Source: UN News



## Australian scientists develop new salt-tolerant wheat variety

Australian scientists have introduced a salt-tolerant gene into a commercial durum wheat, which has produced spectacular results in field trials.

"Salinity already affects more than 20% of the world's agricultural soils and is an increasing threat to food production due to climate change," noted CSIRO scientist, Dr Rana Munns. In close collaboration with researchers at the University of Adelaide, Dr Munns and the team now understand how the gene delivers salinity tolerance to the plants.

The research is said to be the first of its kind in the world to fully describe the development of a salt-tolerant agricultural crop – from understanding the function of the salt-tolerant gene in the lab to demonstrating increased grain yields in the field.

"Under salty conditions, the new salt tolerant breeding line has outperformed



normal commercial durum wheat, with increased yields of up to 25%," CSIRO research Dr Richard James, who led the successful field trials. "Farmers now have additional options for maximising profits by growing premium wheat in those more saline paddocks which they may

typically avoid or reserve for less valuable crops."

The results have been published in the journal, *Nature Biotechnology*. In the photograph, Drs James and Munns examine a salt-tolerant wheat trial near Canberra.

## International Water Management Institute wins international prize

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) has been named the 2012 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate. Headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the organisation won as a result of its pioneering research that has served to improve agriculture water management, enhance food security, protect environment health and alleviate poverty in developing countries. The prize will be presented at World Water Week in Stockholm on 30 August.

IWMI has been a driving force promoting policies and techniques to help farmers produce 'more crop per drop', and to implement solutions that enable agriculture to cultivate enough food to feed the planet's growing population with limited water resources. In its citation, the Stockholm Prize Nominating Committee states: "IWMI is the foremost organisation in agricultural water management. Their work has

led to new policies and investments in agriculture that have not only enabled more productive use of water, but have enhanced food security, economic development and environmental health around the world."

On receiving the news, Dr Colin Chartres, IWMI DG said: "It is an incredible honour for our organisation.

The real winners, of course, are IWMI's dedicated staff who, for just over a quarter of a century, has consistently delivered research of the highest quality. Their work has led to new profound influence on water management policy throughout the globe, delivering real benefits for some of the poorest people on earth."

