At census time, it's not easy being green, writes ELIZABETH RENNICK.

Most of us groan when the Census comes around every five years but the frogs around the Morwell River in the La Trobe Valley are to be subjected to a census every four months.

They won't mind though: no one is going to ask them what income bracket they are in, whether or not they were born in Australia or how many bedrooms they have.

All they'll have to do is go about their normal business and croak away as usual.

It's all part of a project involving 40 students from four local schools. They are being trained to conduct a frog census to find out more about their distribution throughout the greater La Trobe Valley area. Frogs, you see, are good indicators of environmental health.

The children - from Yinnar Primary, Commercial Road Primary, Crinigan Road Primary and the KODE (Koorie Outdoor Education) campus - are learning how to identify the different types of frogs and their calls in the Morwell River Wetlands.

Is it a marsh frog, Peron's tree frog, a whistling tree frog, a pobblebonk, or is it something completely different?

It is the frog's croak that is important - every frog is fingerprinted by its call, says Science in Schools coordinator Max Sargent.

The young researchers are getting first-class training - they're under the tutelage of world-renowned frog expert Gerry Marantelli, an authority on the husbandry and captive breeding of frogs.

Mr Sargent says it is a program the students are really enjoying.

"The kids' reaction has been wonderful. They've been absolutely rapt to be part of it."

Mr Sargent sees the program as a great opportunity for the children to work with real scientists and receive excellent training in a genuine piece of scientific research.

The schools, working with the Morwell River Wetlands Committee, were supported by a $21,000 grant from the Science in Schools Science Partnerships Program.

"The health of our frog population is an important indicator of the health of our environment, so this is a great way of linking classroom science programs with the broader community," Mr Sargent said.

"It will increase community knowledge of frogs found in the Morwell River Wetlands and Crinigan Road Reserve and improve our understanding of the distribution of frogs throughout the greater La Trobe Valley."

Mr Sargent says that now the students have had their initial training, they will be visiting the wetlands at night to record frog calls. They will then send their tapes and preliminary identification of the frogs to Mr Marantelli for verification.

The group will eventually be able to train other members of the community to ensure that a quarterly frog census can be conducted at both sites.