



progress report



Stories from our partners around the world

September 2018
AMPHIBIAN SURVIVAL ALLIANCE
NEWSLETTER



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A Fund for Amphibians in honour of Dr George B. Rabb



In response to ongoing concerns about the lack of widespread donor interest in conserving amphibians, despite their status as the world's most threatened vertebrate group, in 2017 Synchronicity Earth decided to establish the Amphibian Fund to bring much-needed new support to amphibian conservation. In June of that year, Dr George Rabb agreed with Adam Sweidan, Chair of Synchronicity Earth, to lend his name to

the Amphibian Fund. At this time, of course, we had no idea that George would pass away just a few weeks later. As a result, much of the focus over the last year has been on raising support for the Amphibian Fund from George's close friends and colleagues.

As part of our drive to build the new Fund, Synchronicity Earth is collaborating with the Chicago Zoo-

logical Society, of which George had been President for many years. On 16 September 2018, at Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, the Amphibian Fund was presented to a very engaged audience of people who knew George Rabb very well.

The event was opened and closed by Dr Stuart Strahl, President of The Chicago Zoological Society, who made a strong call for support of the

Fund. Dr Simon Stuart, Director of Strategic Conservation at Synchronicity Earth and Deputy Chair of the Amphibian Survival Alliance, then read out a very warm and supportive letter from Joseph Moran Jr., George's nephew (who was unable to attend because of the travel disruption caused by Hurricane Florence). Adam Sweidan, Chair of Synchronicity Earth, gave a moving talk about his encounters with George in recent years, the impact these had on him and how they led to the establishment of the Amphibian Fund. Simon Stuart presented on

the amphibian conservation crisis, focusing on why amphibians are so much more threatened than other groups of species, describing how the crisis is being addressed, and why George cared so passionately about it. Finally, Anne Baker, Executive Director of Amphibian Ark, spoke eloquently about George and his passion for amphibians, and why the Amphibian Fund is such a fitting tribute to him.

More information on the Amphibian Fund can be found [here](#). At this stage we are still growing the Fund,

and we aim to start giving grants by 2019 or 2020. Our hope is that the Amphibian Fund will provide a way for donors to invest long-term in amphibian conservation, and that it will become a major source of sustained funding to help amphibians globally – both saving amphibians and honouring George Rabb, a dedicated founder of global amphibian conservation.

If you would like more information about the Amphibian Fund, contact simon@synchronicityearth.org

Creating a SAFE (Saving Amphibians from Extinction) haven from chytrid



© Sarah-Louise Adams, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

The Mountain Chicken Recovery Programme (MCRP) have recently begun the first phase of trials in the creation of an environmental SAFE haven from the deadly amphibian fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, more commonly known as chytrid.

The Mountain Chicken (*Leptodactylus fallax*), now Critically Endangered as a direct result of the fungus, is a giant frog species found on only two Caribbean islands, Montserrat and Dominica. The population on Montserrat experienced what is believed to be one of the fastest declines of a vertebrate ever recorded, having been reduced to only two known

wild individuals since the arrival of the disease back in 2009.

This project builds on previous reintroductions of captive bred Mountain Chickens, which identified a reduction in chytrid related mortalities to zero during the hot wet season. During this season, temperatures regularly exceed 28°C, the temperature at which laboratory studies have shown chytrid begins to experience mortality. Our safe haven aims to maintain these temperatures year-round, through easily implementable habitat manipulation techniques that include the provision of permanent solar heated ponds and management of

canopy cover to maximize solar radiation to ground level. These areas should act to reduce chytrid load as the mountain chickens move through them, enabling them to survive in an environment where the fungus is now abundant. Over time this process of exposure and treatment should facilitate the development of a natural immune response to the fungus.

To learn more about our project, and find out how you can be a part of the solution, check out our project at <https://experiment.com/projects/creating-a-refuge-from-amphibian-chytrid-fungus-for-the-critically-endangered-mountain-chicken> or follow the Mountain Chicken Project on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) (@ReWildCaribbean).

Mountain Chicken
Recovery Programme

National Geographic Society Species Recovery Grants: Amphibian proposals invited

The mandate of the **IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)** is to “stimulate, promote and support conservation actions for halting biodiversity decline, preventing species’ extinctions, and restoring and conserving intact habitats and ecosystems, both on the ground and in the water”. In partnership with the IUCN SSC, the goal of the **National Geographic Society** request for funding is to halt further biodiversity decline by implementing species conservation plans for species and groups of species.

Proposals that focus on the following themes are encouraged:

- Specific and defensible priority actions to avert decline of a species or group of species;
- Projects that include the active involvement of early career conservationists;

- Projects that support conservation leaders from the countries where the species or group of species occur;
- Typical proposal requests should be less than \$30,000; however, applicants may request up to \$50,000.

Successful applicants may use awarded funds over one or two years. Up to 20 percent of the total can be used as a stipend for the applicant and/or team members. (Please see the **Preparing Your Proposal** page regarding stipend eligibility and other budgetary guidance.) All applications should include a clear review of the state of knowledge about the topic and a plan for evaluating the outcomes of the proposed work. Preference will be given to proposals that include feasible plans to demonstrate change in key, quantifiable indica-

tors of: for example, reduction in drivers of population decline (e.g. unsustainable hunting, fishing or logging); or increase in numbers, degree of protection, or connectivity of populations of the target species or group of species. For any questions, please write to speciesrecovery@ssc.iucn.org.

The next deadline for applications is October 3, 2018. Further calls for applications will go out in 2019.

Please follow this link for full details: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/grants/preparing-your-proposal>



EDITORIAL

We all know that amphibians need our help, and will continue to do so for generations into the future. Learning to share this planet with the wonderful variety of species that were cheerfully squatting in the mud, climbing in the trees, or swimming in the water bodies before we arrived on the scene is one of our great challenges.

As ever, the ASA partnership has been hard at work finding ways to

mitigate the threats that our own species poses. From conservation breeding of threatened species in Madagascar, to creating a refuge for amphibians in Ghana, and disease-free safe havens for a giant Caribbean frog, our partners have been hard at work attempting to make life easier for amphibians.

When I talk to members of the amphibian conservation community, it often occurs to me that many of us have been crazy about amphibians since we were children. Like the princess in the fairy story, some of us just look at frogs and fall in love, and no one can talk us out of it.

In this issue of the Progress Report we meet Trinity Favazza, who just completed her two-year term

as Mayor of Amphibiville at the Detroit Zoological Society and is a recipient of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s 2018 President’s Environmental Youth Award. Now 11 years old, she has some excellent advice for potential amphibian champions everywhere, and is doing her very best to make this word a better, kinder, safer place for our amphibian neighbours.

As Trinity puts it so well: “We need to do more to help our amphibians! We need to do it sooner than most people realize”. With advocates like Trinity, the future of amphibian conservation is looking bright.

Helen Meredith, PhD
Executive Director
Amphibian Survival Alliance



Under-road tunnels help Great Crested Newts



The Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is a European protected species and declining in the UK. This species is being affected primarily by habitat loss and fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation is of particular importance for Great Crested Newts since they typically live in a metapopulation structure and for long-term survival require access to terrestrial and aquatic habitats. Roads that reduce the connectivity between these areas can produce powerful barrier effects for Great Crested Newt migration and dispersal. Understanding and mitigating these potential impacts is particularly important for this species, particularly in the UK where traffic densities and road networks are increasing.

The most promising mitigation is the creation of underpasses or tunnels under roads. These direct amphibians away from the road and aim to provide a link between

habitats. However, the effectiveness and success of these tunnels is poorly understood. In addition, factors including placement in relation to breeding and terrestrial habitats, length of tunnel and microclimate within the tunnels requires further investigation.

Over recent years Froglife have developed and deployed an automated monitoring system using high frequency time-lapse infrared image recording. Froglife have undertaken intensive monitoring of eight sites in multiple tunnels both within the UK and Europe. We have recorded amphibian species, sex, age, direction of travel and whether individuals make full tunnel crossings. Initial findings are positive and demonstrate that this species will migrate both ways through tunnels. In addition, we have observed several other amphibian species travelling through tunnels such as Common

Toads (*Bufo bufo*), Common Frogs (*Rana temporaria*) and Smooth Newts (*Lissotriton vulgaris*). In many cases we have observed individuals making full crossings through tunnels, demonstrating that they may potentially serve to link habitats. However, the design of the tunnel and surrounding mitigation infrastructure appears to be important in the effectiveness of the tunnels. Using data on amphibian movements at multiple sites, Froglife is working on establishing guidance for the most effective tunnel system for Great Crested Newts and other amphibian species. This will aid in providing valuable conservation measures for Great Crested Newts in an increasingly urbanised and fragmented landscape.



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New Endangered Species Refuge designated in Ghana

On August 21st, the Ghanaian government approved the designation of 847 acres—the size of Central Park—as the new Onepone Endangered Species Refuge, safeguarding habitat for numerous threatened species. Rainforest Trust worked closely with its local partner Herp Conservation Ghana to establish this protected area in Ghana’s Togo-Volta Hills near the border with Togo.

“This new refuge is wonderful news for the Critically Endangered Togo Slippery Frog as well as many other threatened and endemic species,” said Rainforest Trust CEO Dr. Paul Salaman. “We are honored to have had such great support from local communities to preserve this biodiverse region, which previously was at risk from deforestation.”

The unique biodiversity of the Togo-Volta region makes it a priority conservation site for endemic plants and animals, including the Critically Endangered Togo Slippery Frog (*Conraua derooi*) and the Endangered Ukami Reed Frog (*Hyperolius torrentis*). Critically Endangered Hooded Vultures, Vulnerable Black-bellied

and White-bellied Pangolins and a plethora of endemic butterfly and amphibian species all reside within this forested habitat that is facing increasing pressures from forest degradation and hunting. Demand for timber and charcoal production, conversion to agricultural land and new settlements drive much of the forest loss.

The new refuge was named for the traditional name of the local people, who have been integral in the official designation. Two local communities gave up land for this designation, and Community Management Committees and a Protected Area Management Board will be created. Rangers will be selected from these communities as well. In addition to these benefits, this new protected area will safeguard a forest stream that is currently a major source of clean water for the rural communities. Water-gathering and washing in the stream have negative impacts on wildlife – specifically the amphibian population. This project will improve the community water supply by constructing two solar-powered, underground water wells. Increased

access to clean water will have both ecological and social benefits. First, it will reduce human dependence on the forest stream, decreasing frog habitat degradation. Second, these wells will reduce the time it takes women and children to collect water, a notoriously arduous and dangerous task that is often undertaken twice a day for several hours.

This protected area was made possible by donors to this project and to the Conservation Action Fund. All gifts to the Conservation Action Fund are matched through the SAVES Challenge and used 100 percent in support of our conservation action.



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Detroit Zoological Society searching for new mayor of Amphibiville

The Detroit Zoological Society (DZS) is looking for a “toadly” new candidate to leap into office this November as Mayor of Amphibiville. The 2-acre wetland village that is home to the Detroit Zoo’s National Amphibian Conservation Center is seeking a “newt” leader for a two-year term.

Amphibiville’s outgoing mayor—Trinity Favazza, 11, of Shelby Township, Michigan—will travel to Washington, D.C., Sept. 21 as one of ten students nationally to receive the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s 2018 President’s Environmental Youth Award. She is being recognized for her work to protect local wetlands and raise awareness

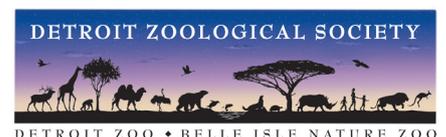
of amphibian conservation as Mayor of Amphibiville.

“Having a mayor of this important conservation center helps spread our mission to younger generations who have so much to contribute as they grow up and become stewards of this planet,” said DZS Executive Director and CEO Ron Kagan.

To join the race to become the new Mayor of Amphibiville, candidates 7-12 years old who live in Michigan should submit an essay of 100 words or fewer on what they can do to help amphibians. All entries must be submitted by October 5, 2018, to PR1@dzs.org or to Mayor of Amphibiville, Detroit Zoological

Society, 8450 W. 10 Mile Rd., Royal Oak, MI 48067. Entries must include the candidate’s name, age, address and a daytime telephone number. The winner will be announced in November with an official swearing-in ceremony.

The new Mayor of Amphibiville will have a plaque inscribed with his or her name displayed in the National Amphibian Conservation Center throughout the two-year term of office and will receive a one-year family membership to the Detroit Zoo.



Q & A with Trinity Favazza, Mayor of Amphibiville

What do you like best about amphibians?

How they have adapted like wood frogs freezing and the use of toxins and warning colors.

Do you have a favorite amphibian species?

Salamanders, but the Luristan Newt stands out to me for sure!

Why did you want to be the Mayor of Amphibiville?

I live on a small, private lake, so I love seeing amphibians in my neighborhood and I wanted to see what I could do to help them.

What did you like the most about being Mayor of Amphibiville?

Getting a chance to be a part of Amphibiville at the Detroit Zoo and help is great. Being able to see and be around the projects at the Detroit Zoo, with my new friends there, is just amazing!

What have you learned from this experience?

I learned how we can help scientist gather data using specific frog calls. A little bit of effort from a few people can make a big difference!

As the outgoing Mayor of Amphibiville, what is your top piece of advice for the new Mayor?

Use every opportunity given to you to talk to people and use social media to share what you love. It really makes a difference because they usually share what you told them with others.

Do other kids at your school care about wildlife?

I think that most do care about wildlife. Hopefully, I have helped inspire them to love and help amphibians and save local wetlands.

Will you continue working on amphibians and their conservation in the future?

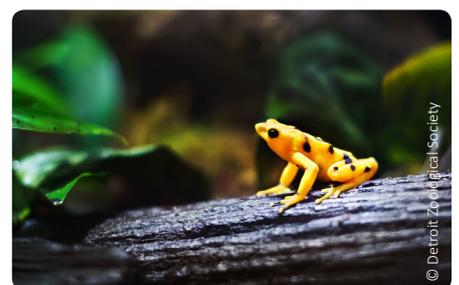
Yes, I plan on continuing to contribute to Frog Watch, by providing local data on frog populations. I will keep sharing what I learn and maybe one day I will have an opportunity to do more when I get older.

What do you want to do when you leave school?

Right now I want to be a teacher, like my mom, but for younger kids (not high school) and will always include amphibians and conservation in my teaching.

What do you think we need to do (or say) to get more people to care about amphibians and their habitats?

We need to get people to understand that amphibians are important because they are more sensitive to environmental changes. Amphibians can help show problems with the environment before it affects people. I think it is terrible that people tend to notice a species, or care about it, when extinction is near, or it has already happened. We need to do more to help our amphibians! We need to do it sooner than most people realize.





Trinity Favazza, Mayor of Amphibiville, Wins Presidential Environmental Youth Award

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that Trinity Favazza, a Michigan sixth grade student was one of ten students nationally to receive the 2018 President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) for her work to protect local wetlands and raise awareness for amphibian conservation. This national award was presented to her at a ceremony in Washington

DC on September 21, 2018. For the past two years, Trinity has been the Mayor of Amphibiville for the Detroit Zoo.

For more information, scroll to "2017 winners, region 5"
<https://www.epa.gov/education/presidents-environmental-youth-award-peya-winners>

Each year the PEYA program honors a wide variety of projects developed by young individuals, school classes (kindergarten through high school), summer camps, public interest groups, and youth organizations to promote environmental awareness. Thousands of young people from all 50 states and the U.S. territories have submitted projects to EPA for consideration.



Call for Proposals: Partnering with Rainforest Trust to protect Key Biodiversity Areas

Rainforest Trust works with local conservation organizations across the tropics to create new protected areas. At the World Conservation Congress in 2016, Rainforest Trust launched the SAVES Challenge, our commitment to direct \$100 million toward creating new protected areas to save the world's most threatened species. Through the SAVES Challenge, Rainforest Trust has the capacity to match, dollar for dollar, projects that target the establishment of protected areas for priority Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). As a member of the KBA Partnership, Rainforest Trust has committed to identifying, mapping, monitoring and protecting the most important places for life on Earth. As an organization, we are especially focused on projects in KBAs with globally significant populations of Critically Endangered (CR) and Endangered (EN) species. To this end, Rainforest Trust wishes to explore partnerships with local conservation organizations interested in establishing new protected areas in places that have either been formally recognized as KBAs or would trigger a new KBA on further evaluation. For more information on KBAs, visit www.keybiodiversityareas.org.

Proposal Requirements:

- The project must be based within the tropics or subtropics.
- The site must qualify as a KBA under criterion A1(a) (site regularly holds a globally significant proportion of the population of a Critically Endangered or Endangered species (1)).
- The site must currently be unprotected and not designated as a protected area.
- The project must be implemented by an organization nationally registered and legally authorized to work in the project country.

In addition, Rainforest Trust supports feasibility studies to assess the potential to create protected areas. Rapid Protected Area Feasibility Awards:

- Assess whether a site qualifies as an A1(a) KBA;
- Evaluate land tenure of unprotected A1(a) KBAs;
- Evaluate the presence and abundance of CR and EN species within unprotected A1(a) KBAs;

- Gauge opportunities to designate governmental protected areas or to purchase privately-owned land;
- Assess community and government interest in protected area creation; and
- Identify next steps in proceeding with protected area creation.

Additional information regarding the SAVES Challenge, project requirements and an eligibility questionnaire can be found at www.RainforestTrust.org/SAVES-Conservation. **Rainforest Trust's next deadline is 1st November 2018, we encourage interested applicants to start the online process as soon as possible and draft applications should be submitted on or before 1st October.** Those interested in exploring opportunities to leverage this support should contact SAVES@RainforestTrust.org.

(1) See <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/46259>, page 16



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New breeding records in Andasibe

The survival assurance center for endemic frogs in Andasibe, Madagascar has been operational for several years now. Working mostly with the same team members as in the beginning, we now take care of 15 frog species, and more will likely enter our biosecure facility in the future. The biggest recent achievement in this regard was the breeding of half a dozen species that had not reproduced in captivity before – neither in Madagascar, nor in other institutions overseas. These species come from two different families with totally different lifestyles and breeding modes (phytotelm breeders and direct developers for example, to name the most remarkable ones). The majority of Malagasy species are rather miniature in size, and so some of the metamorphosed offspring are incredibly small,

which in turn creates some practical impediments: feeding 3mm long frogs having the dimensions of a bread crumb is not the easiest of all tasks. However, one species has already been bred into the second generation and others will follow. This raises hope that more Malagasy species can principally reproduce in captivity if basic requirements are met, a finding that is a true gleam of hope in the rather dull actual development of conservation in this unique but extremely poor country. Furthermore, the focal species of our breeding efforts, the Golden Mantella, has been successfully reintroduced at ephemeral ponds for the first time in 2017. We delivered more than 1000 captive bred specimens to our partner institutions who transported them to restored sites within their natural range.

Outreach is also a vital part of our activities, and to present the local diversity, which encompasses more than 100 species, the visitor's center will receive some larger terrariums. Here, a wide audience can observe some of those species that are normally too hidden to be easily detected. Work has not become less though, opportunities are coming as well, so we thank all donors, partners and overseas institutions for their support which enables us to be in the front line of practical frog conservation in Madagascar!

