

PUBLIC DECLARATION

IMMINENT EXTINCTION OF THE LOA FROG (*Telmatobius dankoi*) FOLLOWING SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE OF THE LOA OASIS, CALAMA, CHILE

Santiago, Chile, August 5th, 2019

The Loa frog (*Telmatobius dankoi*) is a micro-endemic amphibian whose only known population is located in the sector of "Las Vertientes", Calama, Antofagasta Region, Chile (geographic coordinates 503.368 East, 7.511.295 North, Datum WGS84; Figure 1). This species is classified as Critically Endangered on the Species Regulation Classification (Ministry of Environment of Chile) and by The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, and is probably the vertebrate with the highest risk of extinction in Chile.

On July 14th, 2019, members of Ecodiversidad Consultants, representatives of the Museum of Natural and Cultural History of Calama and leaders of the Chinchurri indigenous community residing in the area found that the stream known to harbour the only known population of the Loa frog was completely dry. This was the result of draining around the slope where the stream originated. The area has been impacted by the uptake of water for mining activities, a property development called "Las Vertientes", and diversion of irrigation canals for agricultural use, among others.

In a previous visit to the area, only 62 individuals were found, most of them severely malnourished and restricted to a 10 m² pool (Figure 2). Before this emergency, between July 2nd and 4th, these individuals were relocated to the Opache Eye sector, 6 km from Las Vertientes, in coordination with personnel from the Ministry of the Environment and the Agricultural and Livestock Service. Despite these efforts, the expectations of success for this translocation are not high given the low number of individuals and their poor health, as well as the potential sub-optimal suitability of the new habitat. Since then, additional emergency efforts in the area rescued 14 individuals, which were taken to the National Zoo of Chile for ex-situ conservation actions.

For this reason we ask relevant authorities to launch an URGENT PLAN FOR THE PROTECTION AND RECOVERY OF THE LOA FROG'S HABITAT with the aim of preventing the extinction of this species. We know that this is a complex task, since there is high human pressure in the area with a consequent impact on local water resources. Even so, we appeal to your support to avoid a new irreversible extinction event. This is in line with the interest of the Government of Chile and the

mandate of the State, i.e. to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and the natural heritage of Chile, as well as with the commitments made in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This is reflected in the creation of the Ministry of Environment, and the urgency given to the processing of the bill that creates the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Service of Chile.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Lobos – Associate Researcher Museum of Natural and Cultural History of the Atacama Desert, Calama.

Andrés Charrier – Member, IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group - Chile.

Hugo Salinas – Master in Wild Areas and Nature Conservation, University of Chile.

Claudio Soto Azat – Regional Co-chair, IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group - Chile. Director of the Center for Research for Sustainability, Universidad Andrés Bello.

Felipe Rabanal – President, Herpetology Network Association of Chile (RECH).

Ariadne Angulo – Co-Chair, IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group.

Alejandra Montalba – Director, National Zoo of Chile.

Betsy Pincheira – President, Association of Veterinary Physicians of Wildlife.

Barbara Saavedra – Director, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) – Chile.

Javier Simonetti – Professor and Director, Biological Conservation Laboratory, Universidad de Chile.

Fabian Jaksic – Director, Center for Applied Ecology & Sustainability (CAPES), Catholic University of Chile. National Natural Sciences Award 2018.

Lohengrin Cavieres – President, Ecological Society of Chile. Professor, University of Concepción.

Marco A. Mendez – Full Professor, Universidad de Chile and Member, IUCN Conservation Genetics Specialist Group.

Eduardo Palma – President, Biological Society of Chile. Pontifical Professor, Catholic University of Chile.

Ricardo Bosshard – Director, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – Chile.

César Cuevas Palma – co-author of the species *T. dankoi*, Adjunct Professor, Department of Biological and Chemistry Sciences, Universidad Católica de Temuco.

Don Church – President, Global Wildlife Conservation, and former Executive Director, Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA).

Helen Meredith – Executive Director, Amphibian Survival Alliance.

Anne Baker – Executive Director, Amphibian Ark.



Figure 1. Location of the population of the Loa frog (*Telmatobius dankoi*), southeast of Calama, Chile (Image from Google Earth, dated 2015).



Figure 2. Habitat destruction and rescue of the Loa frog (*Telmatobius dankoi*) in Las Vertientes, Calama. A) Channeling and drainage of habitat. B) Pool with the last 62 translocated individuals. C) Severely malnourished and cachectic Loa frog.