

Amphibian Survival Alliance



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Strategic Plan 2017–2021

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Glossary of Acronyms

AArk	Amphibian Ark
ACAP	Amphibian Conservation Action Plan
ACRS	Amphibian Conservation Research Symposium
ARLA	Amphibian Red List Authority
ASG	IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group
ASA	Amphibian Survival Alliance
CNA	Conservation Needs Assessment (developed by Amphibian Ark)
GAA	Global Amphibian Assessment (2004)
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
SSC	Species Survival Commission
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

1. Executive Summary

The Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) is a partnership of organisations and groups working to implement research and conservation actions for amphibians. These actions are guided by the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP), a road map for global amphibian conservation developed by expert Members of the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG). ASA promotes and coordinates the implementation of conservation actions for amphibians through an active, growing, engaged, committed, and collaborative partnership around the world. ASA works with key coordinating bodies in global amphibian conservation – ASG and Amphibian Ark – to achieve a shared Vision: *Amphibians thriving in nature*.

ASA seeks to mobilise, support, and coordinate an active partnership to implement ACAP globally, maximising representation across ACAP themes, ASG regions, and in terms of investment and communications. We also support the actions of our Partners according to priority themes, and facilitate collaboration among Partners working on inter-related challenges. ASA priorities (2017-2021) include: conservation information and planning (key information resources linked to the development of effective conservation actions); habitat protection; emerging infectious diseases; trade and policy; and communication and education. The role of the ASA Secretariat is: to coordinate and track ACAP implementation; establish and promote priority actions among Partners; support global communication and education initiatives to substantially raise awareness of amphibians; disseminate important information and publicise the work of our Partners; and help stimulate investment in amphibian conservation actions. We seek a future where amphibians are valued and protected as key components of healthy environments, and as essential parts of our world.



Figure 1a: Summary of ASA's four key areas of activity in promoting the partnership.

2. Rising to the challenge of conserving amphibians

Conserving amphibians has never been more important. Around half of all amphibian species are declining, and the proportion of species threatened with extinction has risen to over 40%, making amphibians the most threatened vertebrate group. Once a sanctuary for well over 7,500 species, we now live in a world that is increasingly unsafe for amphibians. Worse still, a world that is unsafe for amphibians is unsafe for other species, not least humankind. The intensifying plight of amphibians mirrors our own struggle, as we try to protect natural resources and bring about a sustainable future for all life on our shared planet.

The needs of amphibians are no different from our own, so the issues they face – such as inadequate freshwater management, habitat destruction, climate change, pollution, unregulated use and trade of species, disease dynamics in a shifting world, invasive species, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources – are extremely pertinent to us, and to all species. These issues, both separately and together, demand the development of collaborative solutions to improve the management of our one and only Earth.

The Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) officially launched in 2011, and has since built a committed global alliance of Partners, dedicated to developing a better world for amphibians through coordinated conservation action. ASA promotes and coordinates the implementation of conservation actions for amphibians through an active, growing, engaged, committed, and collaborative partnership around the world. The great need for this endeavour is reflected in the rate of loss of amphibian populations globally, and we face a challenging future as we strive to reverse these trajectories.

We envisage a future where amphibian conservation is fully collaborative and integrated into global conservation priorities — a future where amphibians are valued for their many contributions to this world, as well as their astonishing beauty and variety. We seek to preserve this variety, as part of healthy ecosystems, for generations to come.



Photo © Brandon Alms

3. Introduction

3.1. Amphibians are important

Amphibians are an intrinsic part of our lives, although their contributions often go unnoticed and uncelebrated (Figure 3a). These contributions range from crucial functions in ecosystems that help maintain healthy environments, to skin secretions that may offer hope in the battle against harmful pathogens, cancer, and numerous other diseases. Studies using amphibians as model organisms have facilitated Nobel Prize winning advances in the understanding of our own developmental biology. Amphibians are an essential part of our living world, helping to alert us to adverse environmental change. Traded domestically and internationally through the ages, amphibians continue to play key roles in human subsistence, culture, and folklore. Though they may slip away quietly, their loss has profound repercussions for our world.

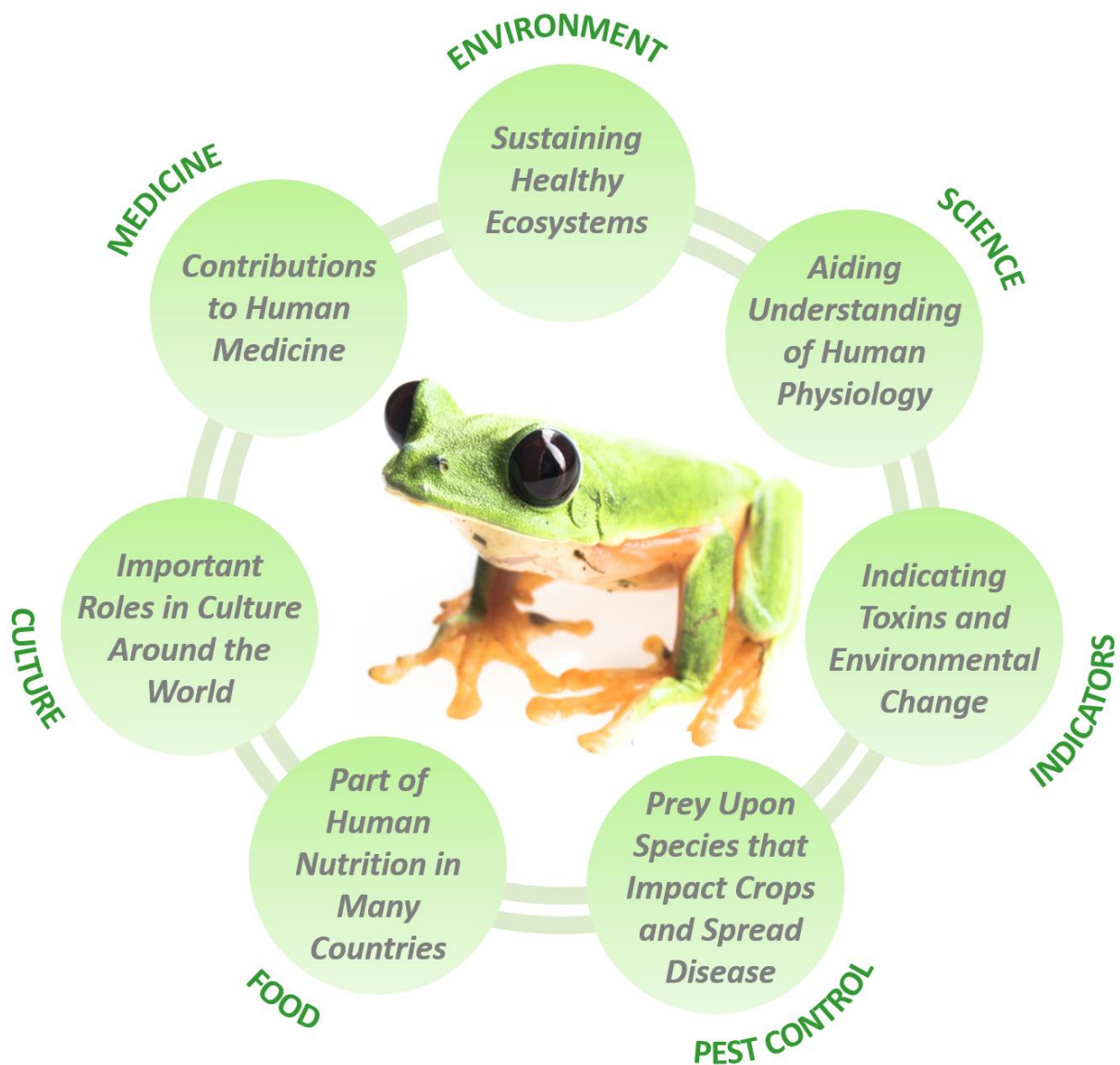


Figure 3a: Some of the many contributions that amphibians make to our world.

Photo © Robin Moore

Amphibian declines have aroused concern since the 1950s, and amphibians are currently the most threatened vertebrate group. Amphibian declines have been attributed to a range of threats, and many amphibian species are thought to be particularly vulnerable due to their narrow habitat preferences and small geographic distributions. This makes them highly sensitive to the rapid pace of environmental change engulfing natural habitats around the world. Key threats include: habitat destruction and fragmentation; emerging infectious diseases; pollution; invasive species; climate change; and unsustainable exploitation through harvesting and trade. These multiple drivers of extinction also act synergistically, which is predicted to accelerate the rate of amphibian population declines in the future as these stressors intensify.

3.2. Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP)

The Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP) provides an essential road map to direct global amphibian conservation actions. First published in 2007, it has recently been updated and now exists as a dynamic, living document on www.amphibians.org (Figure 3b).



Figure 3b: *Amphibian Conservation Action Plan*, available at: <http://www.amphibians.org/publications/amphibian-conservation-action-plan/>

ACAP currently comprises recommendations from 12 Working Groups that are coordinated by the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG). ACAP aims to tackle key issues and approaches relevant to amphibians through recommendations developed by experts, all of which relate to one another in different ways (Figure 3c). Each Working Group has one or more facilitators and a series of members who are responsible for developing recommendations, although to date it has mostly been unclear who is responsible for implementing these recommendations, and what resources are available to support their implementation. ACAP's structure is currently being revised and is set to expand in the future, with the addition of Working Groups for invasive species and habitat restoration, and the incorporation of IUCN Red Listing. ASG will strive to keep ACAP regularly updated to keep pace with the latest imperatives in amphibian conservation science, practice, and policy.

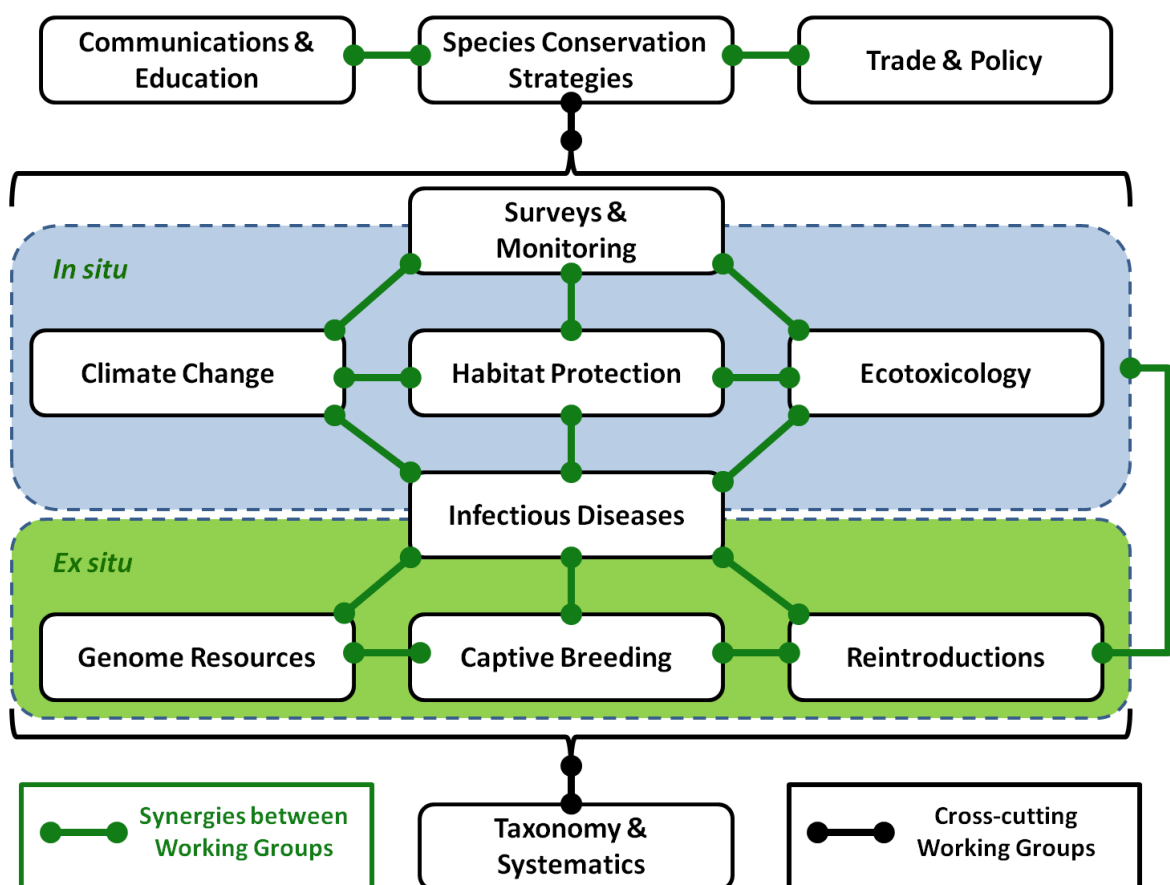


Figure 3c: Current 12 Working Groups of the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan, and some examples of the potential synergies between their activities.

ASG is the science advisory board for ASA. In this role, ASG formulated ACAP, which is the blueprint used by ASA to direct conservation actions. We seek to mobilise, support, and coordinate an active partnership to implement ACAP. This allows ASA to play a crucial role in driving appropriate conservation actions for amphibians, and also track progress as ACAP continues to evolve.

3.3. Coordinating existing networks in amphibian conservation

Amphibian declines have prompted the establishment of many initiatives designed to strengthen global conservation responses. Following the First World Congress of Herpetology in 1989, the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force (DAPTF - now succeeded by ASG and ASA) was formed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) in 1990, with the goal of determining the nature, extent, and causes of global amphibian declines, and promoting the means by which declines can be halted or reversed. Growing concern over the extent and severity of global amphibian declines hastened the completion of the IUCN Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) in 2004, which gathered data on all amphibian species described at the time relating to their distribution, abundance, population trends, habitat associations, threats, and any conservation actions. The GAA heightened widespread concern for amphibians, and was followed up in 2005 by the Amphibian Conservation Summit, convened by the IUCN SSC and Conservation International. This led to the amalgamation of the DAPTF with the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group and the GAA, and the subsequent publication of the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP) in 2007.

Given the urgent nature of threats that could not be mitigated in the short-term, including especially disease and rapid habitat destruction that overwhelmed existing *in situ* conservation capacity, the Amphibian Conservation Summit recommended the establishment of captive assurance colonies for species most at risk. Amphibian Ark (AArk) was formed in 2006 to unite the *ex situ* conservation community and implement the captive programme components of ACAP. AArk developed the global "Year of Frog" campaign in 2007-2008, in collaboration with EAZA, to raise awareness of the plight of amphibians and stimulate conservation efforts. ACAP (2007) also laid the foundations for ASA as an umbrella organisation to coordinate and facilitate global amphibian conservation actions, whilst promoting the necessary communications and investment. ASA was formally established in 2011.

ASA depends on guidance from pre-existing networks in global amphibian conservation. ASA shares vital links with ASG and AArk through Members, Partners and collaborators, as well as through a common Vision, and their respective Missions. ASG is a global network of volunteer experts with an interest in amphibian conservation that strives to provide the best possible science to inform conservation research, practice, and policy. AArk carries out the *ex situ* components of ACAP, working to ensure the survival and diversity of amphibian species by focusing on those that cannot be safeguarded in their natural environments. AArk also conducts regional Conservation Needs Assessments (CNA) to help generate conservation action recommendations for at-risk species. ASG, AArk and ASA collaborate to guide the implementation of amphibian conservation, driven by expert guidance and best practice. In 2016 we developed the shared Vision of "*Amphibians thriving in nature*" to highlight the overlapping and unifying principles behind our initiatives. Together ASA, ASG, and AArk play vital roles in implementing ACAP recommendations across a collaborative global community engaged in amphibian conservation (Figure 3d).

Another essential initiative in guiding conservation action is the assessment of global amphibian extinction risk in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, led by the Amphibian Red List Authority (ARLA) of the ASG (ARLA has taken on the role of the original Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) coordinating team). ARLA strives to assess and update the conservation status of all described amphibian species on a continual basis, seeking to renew assessments every 10 years. This information is fundamental to identifying the risk of extinction, and therefore general or overall conservation need, and provides the bigger picture that enables evaluation of progress towards ensuring the conservation of all amphibian species. Amphibian assessments are currently being updated, and the results published on the IUCN Red List, in collaboration with Amphibian Ark's Conservation Needs Assessments, will provide the most accurate indication to date of what is needed to save amphibians globally.

Our best hope to save amphibians is the continued development of a diverse and coordinated partnership, uniting the amphibian conservation community behind a common cause. As such, we are working together for the benefit of amphibians everywhere.

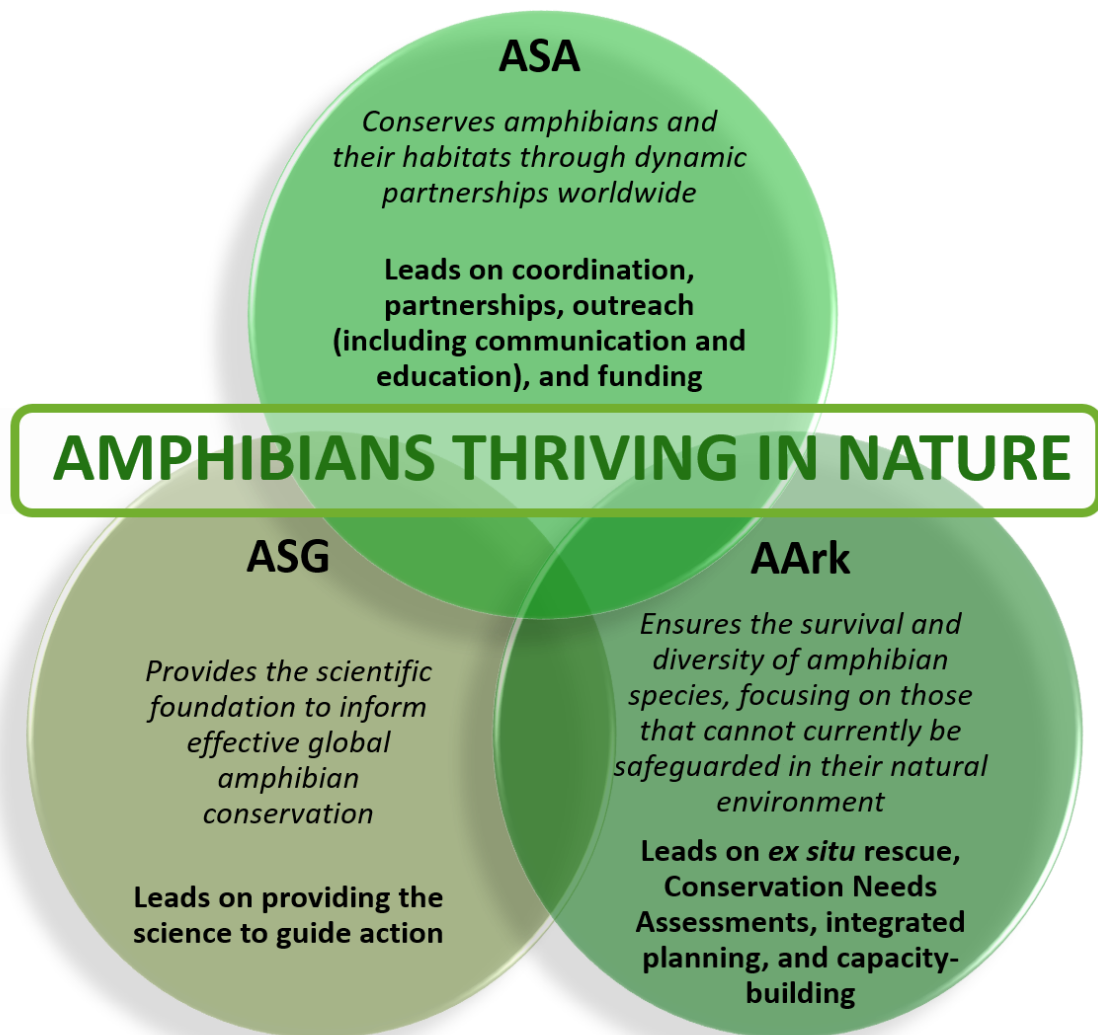


Figure 3d: Summary of the roles and responsibilities of the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA), the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG), and Amphibian Ark (AArk), together with a shared Vision for these three initiatives: "Amphibians thriving in nature".

4. Our Vision and Mission

Vision:

Amphibians thriving in nature.

Mission:

The Amphibian Survival Alliance conserves amphibians and their habitats through a strong, engaged, and collaborative global partnership.



Photo © Paul St. Clair

5. How We Operate

5.1. Guiding Aims

The activities of ASA are underpinned by the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP), which offers the best available guidance to inform the development of global amphibian conservation. ASA works in close collaboration with the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) and Amphibian Ark (AArk) to promote the use of ACAP by our global Partners and Members. The new ACAP is a dynamic document, and aims to capture updates on a more regular basis across its composite expert Working Groups. ASA helps to communicate the recommendations of ACAP to our Partners, together with any updates. ASA also helps ASG and AArk to track the activities of their Members and collaborators in implementing ACAP recommendations, and helps generate investment in activities through Partners and outside sources.

The ASA partnership is committed to the following aims:

- Preventing the extinction of amphibian species;
- Improving the conservation status of amphibian species;
- Protecting, improving, and enlarging areas of habitat important for amphibians;
- Providing national governmental and other decision-makers with conservation advice based on the best scientific studies available;
- Building broad partnerships with all stakeholders needed for effective conservation;
- Coordinating amphibian conservation actions worldwide through the ASA Secretariat;
- Helping, through amphibians, to conserve broader biodiversity and improve the quality of people's lives;
- Educating people about the wonders of amphibians and their roles in maintaining healthy ecosystems, and inspiring appropriate behaviour change.

5.2. Driving Values

ASA is driven by the following core values that underpin all of our activities:

1. **Conservation:** The decline and extinction of amphibian species is unacceptable and there is an ethical imperative to prevent these declines and restore healthy amphibian populations within their natural habitats.

2. **Collaboration:** Ensuring effective and positive collaboration is essential to achieving ASA's Vision and Mission. ASA is a collaboration of global Partners and local stakeholders seeking to implement amphibian conservation guided by ACAP.
3. **Science:** ASA's priorities and actions are guided by the best available science through strong partnerships with ASG and its Members, who are global leaders in amphibian conservation research.
4. **Accountability:** ASA has a responsibility to our Partners to ensure that we move strategically towards our shared Vision and Mission, using any investments in a productive, efficient, and transparent way. Working in collaboration with Partners, ASA: coordinates and promotes the implementation of ACAP by our Partners; identifies and drives forward priorities; stimulates investment; and provides regular updates to communicate progress from across the alliance partnership.
5. **Communication:** ASA values effective and open communication, and is dedicated to promoting the critical work of our Partners, and any opportunities to enhance conservation success through regular updates and the dissemination of important information in educational programmes.



Photo © Chris Hill

6. Our Actions

ASA is a global alliance that recruits, supports, and coordinates a network of organisations to implement conservation actions for amphibians, rather than implementing projects as an independent organisation. ASA takes a four-pronged approach to implementing our Mission of building the networks, capacity, and support necessary to conserve amphibians and their habitats (Figure 6a). ASA is guided by an updated ACAP, and seeks to coordinate the implementation of ACAP recommendations across a strong and engaged global partnership.



Figure 6a: Summary of ASA's four key areas of activity in promoting the partnership.

(i) Partnership (section 7): Amphibian conservation benefits enormously from an active community working on diverse conservation issues around the world. ASA coordinates a collaborative global partnership, recruiting Partners from across this community, while also encouraging new organisations and groups to join the cause. ASA helps to create information to direct conservation efforts, guiding the identification of conservation

priorities at the level of species (e.g. through support of amphibian extinction risk assessment updates on the IUCN Red List) and habitats (e.g. through the Key Biodiversity Areas partnership). Our primary aim is to coordinate the implementation of ACAP, ensuring that Partners take on recommendations and work together to bring these to fruition. ASA also tracks progress on implementing ACAP, and keeps the partnership informed of all developments.

(ii) Priorities (section 8): ASA seeks to establish and drive forward important priorities in amphibian conservation among our Partners. Priorities are developed in close collaboration with the ASG and AArk secretariats to ensure that urgent conservation needs are addressed in the most efficient manner possible. Priorities chosen for 2017-2021 include: conservation information and planning (important information linked to the development of effective conservation actions); habitat protection; combating emerging infectious diseases; trade and policy; and communication and education.

(iii) Investment (section 9): ASA works to stimulate new investment into amphibian conservation actions through supporting diverse fundraising activities, directing funds strategically throughout the partnership, and encouraging Partners to invest in implementing ACAP.

(iv) Communication (section 10): ASA, both centrally and through our partnership, promotes: important updates delivered to diverse groups; the stimulation of applied conservation research; the production of educational materials relevant to different audiences; and media coverage related to amphibians and their conservation (from print and radio, to social media and television/film). We work to raise the profile of this global conservation challenge and ensure that our partnership is supported by relevant information resources.



Photo © Eric Isselee

7. Partnership

7.1. ASA's Partnership: Developing an Alliance to Implement ACAP

The effectiveness of ASA as a conservation alliance is reliant upon the continual development and coordination of a strong and diverse global partnership to drive forward conservation actions for amphibians. ASA seeks to support this partnership to implement the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP) by establishing priorities, stimulating investment, promoting communications, coordinating actions, and tracking progress.

7.2. Partnership Levels

ASA offers four different levels of partnership. Partners can fulfil the criteria of one or more of these levels, each providing a way for Partners to participate in, or promote, different key areas of our united Mission. As key networks in amphibian conservation, ASG and AArk work with ASA to direct the development of ASA's partnership. The general structure of ASA is summarised in Figure 7a. The four levels of partnership are as follows:

(i) Thematic Partner

ACAP comprises a series of crucial recommendations under the banners of different thematic Working Groups. We aim to divide these recommendations among our expanding partnership to help coordinate the implementation of ACAP globally across an engaged and collaborative alliance. Thematic Partners will have the opportunity to log the degree of their involvement in specific ACAP recommendations through the ACAP Tracking Tool (see section 7.3), which can be on a global or regional basis.

(ii) Country Partner

Country Partners champion amphibian conservation activities in specific countries. We aim to recruit multiple Partners across every ASG region (www.amphibians.org/asg/members/), developing collaborative networks of Partners at the country level wherever possible. Country Partners will be supported to build awareness, capacity, and actions for amphibians. For countries that do not have organisations that specifically target amphibian conservation, we seek to recruit Partners who conserve amphibian-rich areas and are willing to get involved in the cause. Country Partners can also log their involvement in specific ACAP recommendations as Thematic Partners.

(iii) Investment Partner

ASA seeks to stimulate investment in amphibian conservation actions to raise new resources for key amphibian conservation priorities. ASA channels funds where they can be most effective, for example through seed grants. Investment Partners facilitate the implementation of ACAP through helping to fund crucial conservation actions.

(iv) Communication Partner

Raising awareness of amphibians to increase their profile is a key aspect of developing public and institutional will to protect them. We seek Communication Partners to help us get the message out effectively all over the world, including those involved in print and social media, radio, and television/motion picture productions.

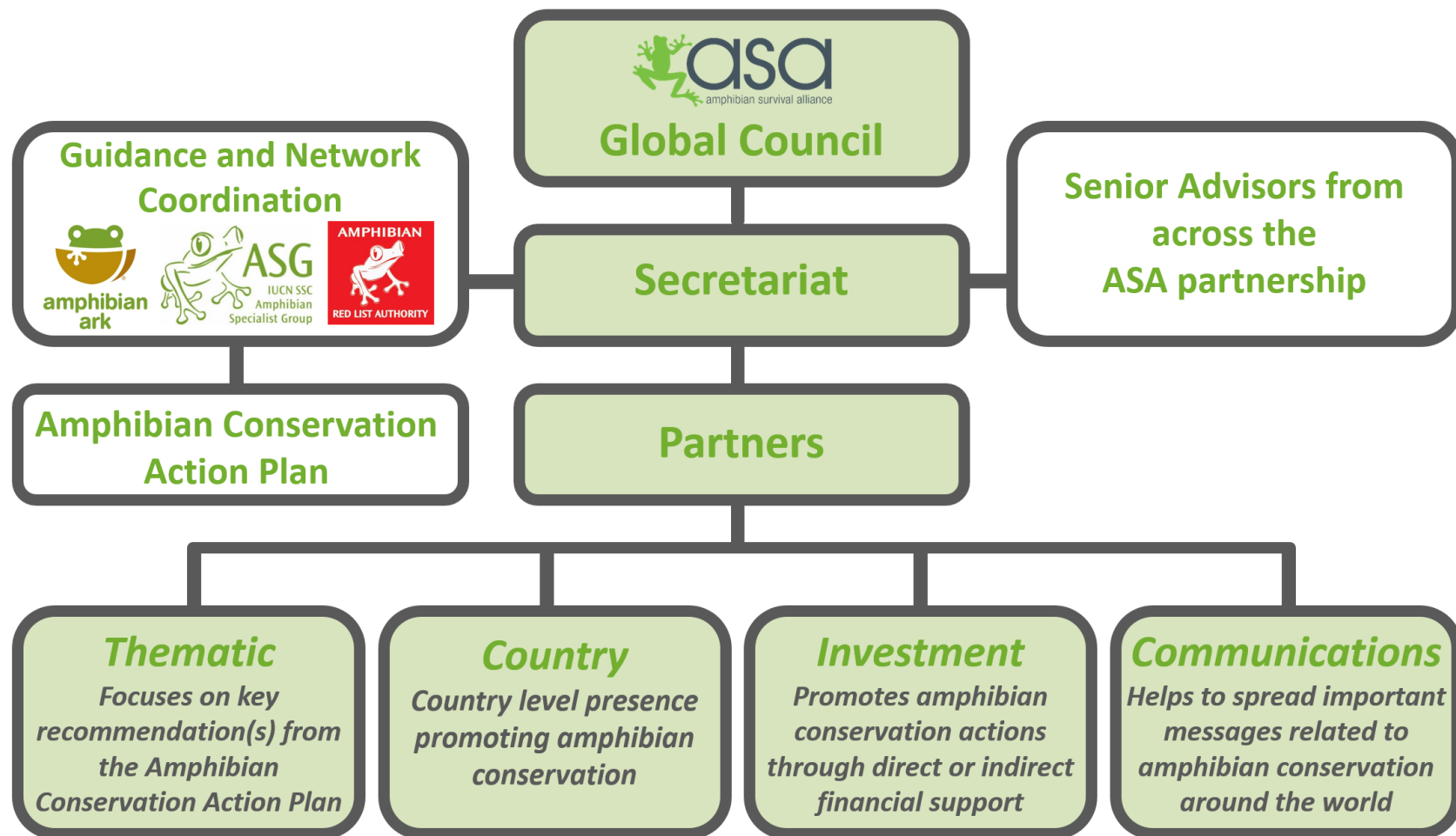


Figure 7a: Structure of ASA, including the guidance, conservation implementation networks, and ASA partnership levels. Partners can be active across more than one partnership level.

7.3. Tracking implementation of ACAP by ASA Partners

ACAP includes over 400 recommendations to guide the direction of amphibian conservation. Evaluating activity across this range of actions on a global basis requires the development of an effective tool to monitor progress. ASA is developing an ACAP Tracking Tool to help with the ongoing evaluation of progress in implementing ACAP across our partnership. It will function as a regularly updated database that contains all the latest recommendations from ACAP, detailing the activities of our Partners in relation to these suggested actions. The ACAP Tracking Tool will also be used by ASG to map the activities of its Members, and similarly by AArk to track actions. This will help us to better understand who is working on what and where, which will facilitate the development of meaningful collaborations that support the implementation of ACAP. It will enable ASA's Partners to take sole or joint ownership of specific recommendations, and encourage the investment of their resources into these actions. We believe that successfully maintaining and developing a conservation alliance is strongly linked to helping constituent Partners feel engaged and valued, and that they are working to their strengths. We want to ensure our Partners are clear about the vital role(s) they play, and how this relates to the bigger picture of conserving amphibians globally. Furthermore, ongoing evaluation of progress on implementing ACAP will help promote the generation of further investment.

The ACAP Tracking Tool will also help guide our Partner recruitment, keep Partners informed of each other's activities, and highlight areas of ACAP with little or no activity. It will inform our fundraising efforts and help order conservation recommendations according to type, for example allowing us to draw out research questions to create a clearing house of projects that may be tackled by academic institutions. Mapping the actions of global amphibian conservation networks will also encourage cross-disciplinary communications, promoting cooperation and discourse between stakeholders working on different approaches and themes, or in different locations. Importantly, the ACAP Tracking Tool will enable the first evaluation of progress on implementing ACAP since the publication of this plan in 2007. The amphibian conservation community is very active, and it is high time we demonstrate the extent of global progress towards implementing ACAP. It will also clearly indicate what remains to be achieved.

7.4. Partner Recruitment and Support Strategy

ASA will use the ACAP Tracking Tool to guide Partner recruitment, building a global partnership with good representation across the recommendations outlined in ACAP. Partnership levels will also be considered to ensure this representation is valid thematically, regionally, and in terms of communication and investment support. ASA currently has over 100 valued Partners, and we will map their activities and partnership level(s) prior to expanding the partnership further.

To facilitate ongoing engagement and management of the partnership, ASA will provide a range of support to our Partners, including:

- Access to the latest scientific guidance to inform conservation planning and action for amphibians;

- Regular progress reports detailing the latest accomplishments and challenges from across the partnership;
- Partnership coordination to implement ACAP, and periodic progress evaluations;
- Assistance with promoting major updates through ASA's communication channels, and the development of media opportunities;
- Help with fundraising, through sharing information related to relevant grants and networks, and providing any necessary support for applications;
- Stimulating investment into amphibian conservation, and channelling ensuing funds through projects and seed grants made available to Partners;
- Development of a Partner to Partner Mentoring and Support Scheme, linking up Partners where possible to promote capacity building and mutual benefits to each other's activities, and providing advice on the best available capacity building initiatives;
- Networking, action plan, and project development advice.



Photo © Dirk Ercken

8. Priorities

8.1. Choosing priorities

ACAP provides key guidance for the formation, activities, and management of ASA's partnership. ASA seeks to develop a partnership with relevant organisations that is representative of all ACAP Working Group themes. However, to maximise progress in the context of limited financial resources, ASA will prioritise five key areas, whilst the remaining aspects of ACAP will receive ongoing attention from ASG and AArk (Figure 8a).

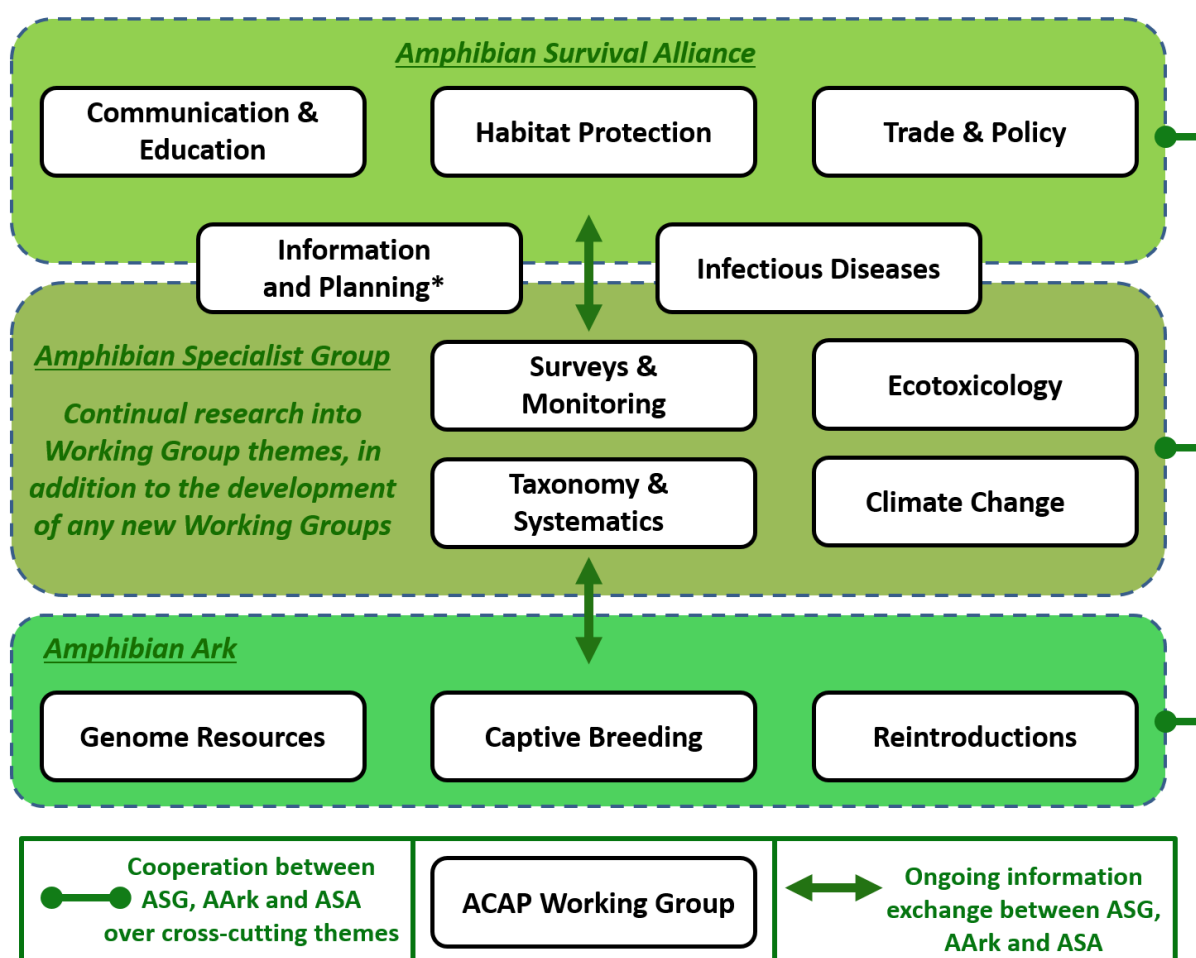


Figure 8a: Division of ACAP themes among ASA, ASG and AArk, informing priorities for ASA.

Information and Planning* includes Species Conservation Strategies Working Group recommendations, in addition to IUCN Red Listing, Key Biodiversity Areas site identification and mapping, and Amphibian Ark's Conservation Needs Assessments.

In addition to promoting progress across our priorities, ASA will continue to recruit Partners to implement ACAP's recommendations from all Working Groups. Latest details of ACAP recommendations for each priority may be found here:

www.amphibians.org/publications/amphibian-conservation-action-plan/

8.2. ASA priorities for 2017-2021

The five priorities that ASA promotes through our Partners may be summarised as follows:

(i) Conservation Information and Planning:

Our ability to effectively conserve amphibians hinges on the quality and availability of the latest scientific guidance. ASA works with ASG, AArk, and AmphibiaWeb to develop, integrate, and disseminate important information linked to the development of effective conservation actions, all of which are integrated into ACAP. Key information resources supported by ASA include:

- **IUCN Red List:** Our knowledge of the extinction risk of amphibians is fundamental to our ability to prioritise species conservation actions. The IUCN Red List performs a critical role in providing information relevant to protecting species, informing many other conservation initiatives such as the development and update of Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites. In addition to conservation status, it provides details of species ecology, distribution, population, threats (including use and trade), and key expert contacts, both regionally and taxonomically (www.iucnredlist.org). ASA works with ASG (ARLA) to support updates to the IUCN Red List so that it may continue to provide the essential information that our partnership is reliant upon.
- **Key Biodiversity Areas:** ASA, alongside Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC), is a founding member of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) partnership (www.keybiodiversityareas.org). The KBA partnership is a ground-breaking initiative in which eleven of the world's leading nature conservation organisations are working together to map, monitor, and conserve the most important places for life on Earth. KBAs are sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity, and their identification is underpinned by the IUCN Red List, and may be used to inform site-based conservation prioritisation efforts. ASA and GWC will strive to ensure that significant areas for threatened amphibians are identified and prioritised for protection through appropriate and inclusive regionally-led processes.
- **Conservation Needs Assessments:** The Conservation Needs Assessment process is managed by Amphibian Ark and seeks to objectively and consistently identify priority species and their immediate conservation needs (www.conservationneeds.org). ASA works with AArk to promote the use and development of these assessments to help direct *in situ* and *ex situ* action where it is most urgently required.
- **Conservation Action Planning:** ASA supports the development of the ACAP Species Conservation Strategies Working Group (SCSWG) to deliver crucial guidance on producing action plans for threatened species based on information and recommendations from the IUCN Red List, KBA partnership, and Conservation Needs Assessments. ASA will support SCSWG's aims to: ensure threatened amphibians are covered by either national or range-wide conservation strategies; to develop tools for assessing the effectiveness of conservation strategies; and to help standardise the development of conservation strategies according to the latest notions of best-practice, with guidance from the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG). ASA will work with ASG to promote conservation action planning across the partnership.

- **Conservation Evidence:** ASA Partners and ASG Members work with the University of Cambridge Conservation Evidence Initiative (www.conservationevidence.com) to encourage the use of evidence-based conservation decision-making, and to encourage collection of evidence to inform key decisions when evidence is lacking. ASA previously funded the first Amphibian Synopsis of Conservation Evidence, which permitted an assessment of effectiveness in currently practiced amphibian conservation interventions (www.conservationevidence.com/pdf/What-Works-in-Conservation.pdf). ASA wants to keep this resource updated to help guide the practice of effective conservation interventions and build knowledge going forward.
- **Cross-cutting themes:** ASA will work with ASG and AArk to promote communication across ACAP Working Groups to develop scientific research and guidance on how to identify, understand, and manage threats that are linked and/or act synergistically, such as emerging infectious diseases, climate change, and pollution. ASA will also help to ensure that all conservation information and planning resources are linked up to promote information sharing where appropriate.

(ii) Habitat Protection:

The destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of natural habitats is the greatest threat impacting amphibians today. Guided by the KBA initiative, ASA will disseminate vital information on important sites for amphibians, and will work with key Partners such as GWC, Rainforest Trust and others to promote investment in the acquisition and protection of these sites. ASA also coordinates Partners to implement KBA protection in concert with other ACAP recommendations from the Habitat Protection Working Group.

(iii) Emerging Infectious Diseases:

The battle to develop mitigation strategies against emerging infectious diseases is a crucial aspect of reversing amphibian declines globally. There are many important research questions that require significant attention from academic institutions. ASA will work with ASG to promote promising new research directions that help to identify realistic practical solutions. We will strive to recruit academic and zoo-based collaborators through ASG who are able to pursue research linked to key ACAP recommendations, and continue to participate in amphibian disease taskforces (e.g. www.salamanderfungus.org), in collaboration with Partners such as AmphibiaWeb and PARC (Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation). ASA will also work to stimulate investment into seed grants to encourage uptake of vital research questions by the academic community, including those exploring inter-relationships between disease and other threats. Among other new directions, ASA will participate in the IUCN Synthetic Biology Policy Process to determine the risks and potential benefits of any novel methods to combat amphibian disease.

(iv) Trade and Policy:

ASA has previously participated in effective collaborations to prevent amphibian trade from spreading infectious diseases, such as the risk of chytridiomycosis (caused by the fungal pathogen *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal)) infecting salamanders in North America. The value of this work remains extremely high, especially in countries with high amphibian species richness that are vulnerable to the spread of disease. ASA will promote the development of stronger quarantine requirements to prevent the spread of disease

through amphibian trade. ASA will continue to raise awareness of the risks posed by the unregulated trade of amphibians, both in terms of disease and over-exploitation. Overharvesting can be a prominent threat at the national level. ASA will encourage Partners to find context-specific solutions to the over-exploitation of amphibians, investigating trade restrictions or bans and sustainable use options as appropriate. ASA also works with ASG and our Partners, such as Defenders of Wildlife, to promote trade restrictions and/or bans through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and legislation that may reduce national level exploitation. ASA can also serve a facilitation role, putting concerned parties in touch with relevant country specialists to tackle trade issues where necessary.

(v) Communication and Education:

Improving communication and education about amphibians is central to our Mission. We will continue to optimise our communication strategy to support the recommendations of the ACAP Communication and Education Working Group, and recruit Communication Partners who can help us to build impact in this area (also see section 10).



Photo © Kris Ercken

9. Investment

ASA is well -placed to act as a central coordinating body for generating new investment in amphibian conservation, and directing funds throughout the amphibian conservation community. We promote high quality projects and initiatives, and map the activity of the amphibian conservation community against recommendations outlined in ACAP. If donors want to invest in amphibian conservation but are unsure of the best way to direct their donation, we can match them with appropriate projects being implemented by our Partners, both regionally and thematically, which contributes to the bigger picture of implementing globally effective conservation actions for amphibians.

Furthermore, donations to core ASA operations will help promote our activities in a great many ways, including:

- An active secretariat that coordinates implementation of ACAP, drives forward priority actions across the ASA partnership, and promotes communications and fundraising both within and beyond the partnership. Support to develop vital new roles within the secretariat is also key to maximising the future effectiveness of ASA;
- Contributions to the functioning of ASG, including the ongoing update of amphibians on the IUCN Red List, and disseminating key evidence to inform conservation decision-making for amphibians;
- The development of seed funding to promote the work of our Partners in research, practical conservation, and policy-related actions and projects;
- Supporting major fundraising initiatives for large programmes to be implemented by our Partners;
- Active representation in the KBA partnership to promote the protection of important sites for threatened amphibians globally;
- Capacity building through ASA's Partner to Partner Mentoring and Support scheme, and funding the Amphibian Conservation Research Symposium's Future Leaders in Amphibian Conservation initiative.

ASA depends on the continued support of our Global Council members, many of whom contribute directly to our core costs. We aim to increase the number of Global Council members who can support the financial and governance needs of ASA, helping us to grow our partnership and become ever more effective in improving the impact of global conservation actions for amphibians.

10. Communication

ASA is committed to raising the profile of amphibians and their ongoing extinction crisis through imaginative and dynamic communication channels. We are eager to illuminate and share the fantastic work of our Partners, and publicise a wide variety of amphibian stories from around the world. We disseminate news of threats and declines, but also promote stories about new species, fascinating behaviours, and the wonderful people who champion amphibians globally. ASA celebrates amphibians, and educates diverse audiences about the challenges they face. Overall, we want people to appreciate the amazing world of amphibians, and through this develop a strong sense of why we must work together to protect them. Through these communications, we also seek to grow our support base.

ASA promotes the sharing of valuable information resources, such as details of grants, the latest evidence to guide amphibian conservation interventions, conservation planning guidelines, and other useful materials that will improve the impact of conservation actions. We work with well-connected Partners, such as AmphibiaWeb and Amphibian Ark, to promote the sharing of important information across the amphibian conservation community. ASA employs a diverse range of communication tools (Figure 10a), including:

- **Amphibians.org**, the shared online home of ASG and ASA, is a dynamic website acting as the hub of our communication network. It is designed to help build the amphibian conservation community, raise funds for global conservation efforts, and help mobilise and coordinate individuals and organisations to promote successful conservation outcomes;
- **Social media** platforms present additional channels through which ASA can exchange information with stakeholders and the public (including citizen science groups), and form online communities focused on amphibian conservation;
- **The Froggress Report** is ASA's bi-monthly newsletter to Partners. This brings together updates from across ASA to develop a strong alliance and celebrate the achievements of the partnership. It also permits the regular exchange of important information relevant to our Partners, together with updates on progress with the implementation of ACAP;
- **FrogLog** is an informative non-peer-reviewed resource for the amphibian conservation community that is readily accessible to both professionals in the community and those who have a strong personal interest in a wide variety of amphibian conservation topics. *FrogLog* also reports on implementing ACAP;
- Conferences and scientific publications serve as networking opportunities for ASA to share, address, and discuss amphibian conservation challenges, and the latest research and developments in conservation science and implementation. In addition, we co-organise the annual **Amphibian Research Symposium Conservation (ACRS)**, which promotes the exchange of conservation science that directly informs practical conservation actions for amphibians, and **amphibians.org** hosts the journal **Alytes: The International Journal of Batrachology**;
- Direct contributions to the Communication and Education Working Group of the **Amphibian Conservation Action Plan**.



Figure 10a: Summary of ASA's communications tools with reference to different audiences

11. Conclusion

Finding effective remedies to the global amphibian extinction crisis demands cooperative, focused, and continuous attention from a wide variety of organisations and individuals.

We are compelled to stimulate efforts to build capacity, increase interest, develop resources, and generate the results needed to make a success of amphibian conservation around the world.

The Amphibian Survival Alliance aims to be at the forefront of a global movement to drive forward a collaborative approach to conservation that will secure a better future for amphibians and the ecosystems they sustain.



Photo © Eric Isselee

APPENDIX 1: ASA SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT analysis of the Amphibian Survival Alliance combines key points made during a meeting of the ASA Global Council and a joint meeting of members of the ASG, AArk and ASA secretariats.

STRENGTHS:

- The focus of ASA is very clear – it has a strong identity.
- The conservation case for amphibians is overwhelming.
- The field is not so crowded – amphibian conservation is not as competitive as some other prominent issues in conservation.
- ASA benefits from two regularly updated plans: the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP) and ASA's guiding plans (including the strategy and a supporting operational plan).
- ASA is engaging with key Partners in developing its new strategy from a very early stage, soliciting input and involvement to generate important updates and buy-in from key Partners and advisors, including the Amphibian Specialist Group and Amphibian Ark.
- ASA already has a lot of Partners, who can support a great variety of elements of both ACAP and ASA's own linked strategy (see also "Threats").
- ASA can demonstrate clear value to Partners, although it is very important to quantify and communicate this value.
- ASA's partnership includes a lot of committed, supportive, and active Partners.
- The amphibian conservation community is well-connected and relatively cooperative/mutually supportive.

WEAKNESSES:

- Insufficient organisations/entities have prioritised amphibian conservation; amphibian conservation remains a poorly represented and under-supported cause due to perceived lack of significance/public interest compared to other conservation imperatives.
- A lot of important audiences still do not know ASA exists (particularly in developing and/or non-English-speaking countries).
- Confusion persists in terms of how ASA relates to ASG and Amphibian Ark – we need to explain the links better and engage people in supporting a united partnership for amphibian conservation.
- Not enough ASA Partners funding core activities.
- Insufficient ASA fundraising capacity.
- Insufficient leadership representation from amphibian-biodiverse parts of the world in the ASA Global Council.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Zoos and new conservation organisations are much more open to supporting amphibian conservation.
- Amphibians present an interesting new narrative in species conservation.
- ASA is developing a new Partner recruitment strategy, to help manage the partnership according to strategic aims.
- ASA will increasingly engage with new types of Partners, for example: "Thematic Partners" to address neglected/labour intensive aspects of ACAP; "Country Partners" to champion amphibian conservation at the country level, and achieve a more regionally

balanced partnership; "Investment Partners" in the corporate/financial sector to raise funds for vital actions, and "Communications Partners" to help get the message out across diverse audiences.

- ASA can help to reenergise the ACAP Working Groups, at the same time as ASG is reconstituting for the new IUCN quadrennium and seeking to attract and promote a more engaged Membership.
- ASA can continue to help shine a light on amphibian conservation efforts, sharing news from across the partnership to highlight the many committed organisations/initiatives and fascinating ongoing projects.
- ASA is continuing to build an alliance that offers Partners a number of clear benefits, such as: improved access to the latest science/information resources to help inform conservation efforts; increased visibility through communications support; fundraising advice and increased access to funding; a voice in multi-stakeholder international spaces; alignment with national/international initiatives, providing an overarching purpose beyond the scope of their organisation; international legitimacy; and capacity building.
- The ability to track the implementation of ACAP through the development of an online ACAP Tracking Tool, permitting regular evaluation of progress, strategic Partner recruitment, and enhanced collaboration with ASG and Amphibian Ark to help drive forward ACAP recommendations.

THREATS:

- Leading a conservation partnership where the Partners are front and centre can make it more difficult to demonstrate the value of ASA as a central coordinating body to donors. ASA must develop specific tangible goals, a clear purpose, and strong benefits to its Partners (e.g. follow relevant aspects of the BirdLife model).
- There is a lack of amphibian conservation capacity on the ground – it is essential to leverage additional capacity, and support capacity building initiatives, wherever possible.
- Amphibians suffer from certain threats that currently have no solutions, such as several emerging infectious disease. We need to find ways of mitigating these threats, and/or managing amphibian populations in the context of these threats.
- The scientific guidance that ASA relies on can sometimes overly depend upon voluntarism, which can impact the quality and timeliness of important updates to resources, such as ACAP, the IUCN Red List, conservation evidence, conservation action plans, and other key resources. We need to find sustainable ways of resourcing the development and update of these key knowledge resources wherever possible.
- ASA has a lot of Partners, although many are currently inactive and/or lack appropriate guidance from ASA in terms of their roles within the partnership. It is vital that the new strategy (and any associated guidance) provides clear roles for Partners so they may understand how they are contributing to the bigger picture of global amphibian conservation.
- ASA is currently under-financed in terms of driving forward key priority actions in line with the new strategy. Furthermore, in certain contexts, it is currently more difficult for conservation initiatives that focus on biodiversity to raise money. This leads to a lot of amphibian projects competing for the same resources. It is important that ASA identifies funding sources that have supported amphibians historically, and communicates these to Partners to facilitate their fundraising efforts. It is also important that ASA "grows the pie", rather than competing with its Partners for the same pots of money.