



progress report

Stories from our partners around the world

DECEMBER 2016

AMPHIBIAN SURVIVAL ALLIANCE

NEWSLETTER



Got a story you want to share?
Drop Candace an email today!
cmhansen@amphibiansr.org



As part of the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA), you belong to a fantastic network of partners promoting global amphibian conservation. This bi-monthly update is designed to shine a light on your achievements. We will bring you stories from across ASA, highlighting outstanding projects and introducing you to the fantastic people who make them happen.

We hope this news will inspire you to get in touch regularly and tell us about your actions. The amphibian conservation community is creative, inspirational, determined, and growing all the time. We want to give you the opportunity to share your important news and learn about how we are working together to make a better world for amphibians.

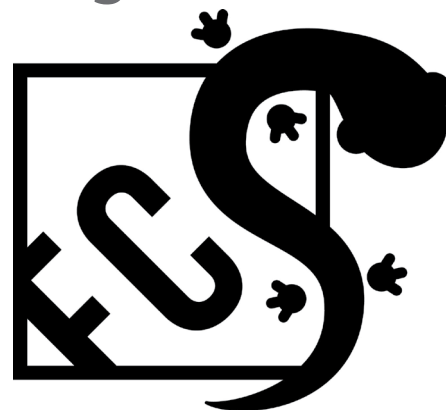
After all, a better world for amphibians is a better world for everyone.

Dr. Helen Meredith
Executive Director
Amphibian Survival Alliance

Lending a helping hand to salamanders

2016 was a productive year for the **Foundation for the Conservation of Salamanders** (FCSal). We launched our newest initiative, Salamander Saturday, an international day to promote awareness about salamanders and their habitats. This year over 20 events were held throughout the United States and Canada. FCSal will be celebrating salamanders on the first Saturday in May annually, and is gearing up for an even bigger impact on May 6, 2017!

We reviewed our first international grants in 2016 and we received 15 extraordinary applications. FCSal awarded \$4,474 to Dr. Christopher Michaels from the Zoological Society of London and Jose Alfredo Hernandez Diaz from Africam Safari for their incredible work with the Taylor's salamander in Laguna Alchichica, Mexico. FCSal also contributed to three educational outreach projects that will aid in developing global appreciation for salamanders and their habitats. You can find out more about our past grant recipients by visiting www.FCSal.org.



This coming year FCSal is offering three grants. We will offer the Dan M. DiGiacomo small grant for research, education, and/or conservation efforts in the amount of \$5,000. Additionally, a \$2,000 grant specific to zoo conservation will be offered to support initiatives by zoos & aquariums, their employees, or efforts made on zoo grounds. This grant is offered in recognition of the monumental support provided to FCSal by zoos and American Association of Zoo Keeper chapters since we began as Chopsticks for Salamanders. Lastly, we will be offering an additional grant of \$1,000 to support Texas salamander research.

For more information about FCSal or to donate, visit www.FCSal.org.

did you
know
that ?

The Foundation for the Conservation of Salamanders is dedicated to increasing awareness about salamanders and their habitats and to providing key funding to salamander conservation projects.



Rainforest Trust launches the SAVES Challenge and scales up the global response to protecting critical sites for amphibians

As a Partner of the ASA, Rainforest Trust is dedicated to helping safeguard amphibians around the world. James Lewis, former director of operations for the ASA, joined the Rainforest Trust conservation team in June 2016 to help increase their engagement in amphibian and reptile conservation efforts. During the next four years, they aim to significantly increase their contribution to amphibian conservation.

At the IUCN's World Conservation Congress in September 2016, we launched our SAVES (Safeguarding Areas Vital to Endangered Species) Challenge. Through our SAVES Challenge, Rainforest Trust has committed to direct a total of \$100 million to establish new protected areas to save the world's most threatened species, and amphibians and reptiles are high on our priority list.

During the past six months, we have already supported a number of herpetological projects in Central and South America (Panama, Colombia and Ecuador), Africa (Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar) and Asia (India, Vietnam and the Philippines), helping to secure millions of acres of

critical habitat for amphibians and reptiles. We are currently working to increase the number of global projects that offer refuge for at-risk herpetofauna, including sites where endemic species new to science are currently being discovered.

But this is just the beginning, as we recognize the connectivity between creating protected areas and ensuring that species' information is accurate and up-to-date. Rainforest Trust is committed to helping the IUCN Red List and the newly launched Key Biodiversity Areas Initiative and is an active member of the IUCN. IUCN knowledge tools are vital assets for the conservation community, and we believe strongly in supporting their upkeep and use.

As the SAVES Challenge grows, we call on all ASA members to connect with us. Share your amphibian conservation goals and successes with us, and let's explore opportunities to partner together— and most importantly, how we can further our joint commitments to stem the loss of amphibians and ensure that these incredible species remain secure in nature.

Please review details on the [SAVES Challenge](#) and learn more about partnership opportunities.



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TRUST®**

Hope in the face of 10,000 deaths

"This is the best of conservation: innovating in the face of insurmountable odds, spurred by a utilitarian hope that even as humans have the power to destroy the planet—their only home—they also have the power to safeguard it."

Read the full story at in this edition's *Featured Blog* by Lindsay Renick Mayer from our partner Global Wildlife Conservation at: <http://www.amphibians.org/news/hope-in-the-face-of-10000-deaths/>

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Grasping environmental knowledge

Frogs are very threatened but do not get the attention they should be getting. We often ignore the fact that they play a huge role in our freshwater systems and in the food chain. The Pickersgill's Reed Frog is highly threatened by human activities, including encroachment of alien vegetation. A lot of research is being done to conserve this species and its wetland habitat, be it by genetic sampling and monitoring, or wetland health assessments. Scientific research is not the only way to conserve a species; education and awareness is also very important.

The **Endangered Wildlife Trust's Threatened Amphibian Programme** (TAP) is working with Martha Bishai, the director of the Umkhumbane Schools Project to engage learners on the importance of wetlands and amphibians using attitude surveys.

We have been engaging two schools in Cator Manor namely, Chesterville Secondary and Wiggins Secondary. The purpose of the engagement is to get an idea of the learners' level of environmental knowledge, focusing on frogs and wetlands. To date we have conducted surveys for grade 8 and grade 11 students in both schools. The total number of learners that have participated is 93 from Wiggins and 90 from Chesterville. The process involves a before and after assessment whereby learners are given a pre-questionnaire to answer without us engaging them about environmental issues. We then go back to the learners the following week to engage with them, showing them frogs in the classroom and actually taking them out



© Endangered Wildlife Trust

on a wetland trip. We then conduct follow-up questionnaires to find out if their attitudes have changed at all towards frogs and wetlands after the interventions and hands-on learning experiences.

This work is very interesting because we also find out different stories from different families, which helps us understand why people behave in a certain way towards an animal.



Species in focus

did you know that ?

The Strawberry Poison Frog *Oophaga pumilio* of Central America has undergone a dramatic radiation in color pattern across allopatric populations living on different Panamanian islands of the Bocas del Toro archipelago and the nearby mainland.



Previous research had found that a number of the island populations showed biased mating preferences toward the color pattern of their own population, suggesting that sexual selection is driving divergence, reproductive isolation and ultimately speciation.

In a transition zone between red and blue frogs, **Yang et al (2016)** carried out a key test of whether mating preferences are likely drivers of reproductive isolation and speciation by comparing preferences of a contact zone population where individuals encounter pure morphs (red and blue) and intermediates.

As expected, they found that pure morphs from either side of the contact zone displayed a significant preference for their own color pattern morph (e.g., blue females preferred blue males). Yet, intriguingly, they found that frogs from the contact

zone showed a strong preference for the red morph, even if they were blue. This contradicts a key prediction that sexual selection is driving reproductive isolation and speciation in this system, and opens up questions of what is preventing the blue morph from being swamped by genes for the red morph, which is the common mainland pattern of *O. pumilio*.



So, what has the ASG been up to?



The last three months have been eventful for the **IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group** (ASG). ASG started off a period of key international meetings with two dedicated amphibian conservation symposia in the context of the 8th World Congress of Herpetology (WCH), held in Tonglu (changed from Hangzhou), China, from 15–21 August, 2016. The first symposium was dedicated to the refinement of priorities for global amphibian conservation, whereas the second one was focused on Asian priorities, challenges and opportunities for amphibian conservation. Both symposia combined had a total of 18 speakers and were well attended.

Shortly after WCH, ASG hosted an amphibian conservation workshop in the context of the World Conservation Congress (WCC), held in Honolulu, Hawaii, from 1–10 September, 2016. The two-hour amphibian event was an interactive workshop where 38 participants helped brainstorm three key questions for amphibian conservation. There was also a separate meeting kindly hosted by Honolulu Zoo where ASG, ASA and Amphibian Ark met to

discuss a joint vision for all three groups.

Following WCC, ASG and ASA were invited to give the plenary at the Canadian Herpetological Society's annual meeting, held in Toronto from 16–19 September, 2016. The shared presentation focused on the nature of the relationships between ASG, ASA and Amphibian Ark, and was delivered to an audience of over 120 herpetologists from across Canada.

Finally, amphibians were represented at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) 17th Conference of the Parties (CoP) from 24 September–5 October, 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Five amphibian proposals encompassing seven anuran and one salamander species were proposed by range states of Bolivia and Peru, Madagascar and China. ASG attended the meeting as an IUCN observer with the support of ASA and Defenders of Wildlife, and played an important role in the final decisions surrounding amphibian proposals.



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Global Wildlife Conservation's (GWC) Amphibian Red List Authority Program Officer Kelsey Neam has recently focused her efforts on working with partners to assess the conservation status of amphibians throughout the tropical Andes of South America, including Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela and Argentina.

This region has remarkable levels of endemism and supports the greatest diversity of amphibians in the world, but it also has one of the highest concentrations of threatened amphibians. As a result, the tropical Andes represents a global priority for conservation. GWC is also working with partners on first-time assessments for newly described amphibians of Brazil and updating amphibian assessments for Southern Africa in collaboration with the South African Frog Re-assessment Group.



Organizers of the WCC amphibian workshop with Dame Jane Goodall. From left to right: Jennifer Luedtke (Amphibian Red List Authority Coordinator), Phil Bishop (ASG Co-Chair), Dame Jane Goodall, Helen Meredith (ASA Executive Director), Ariadne Angulo (ASG Co-Chair) and Jeanne Tarrant (ASG Habitat Protection Working Group Co-Facilitator).



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A helping hand for the Titicaca water frog

The Amphibian Ark (AArk) first “met” Arturo Muñoz in 2010 when he applied for an Amphibian Ark seed grant to establish a captive breeding center for *Telmatobius* at the Museo de Historia Natural Alcide d’Orbigny in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

The Amphibian Ark’s Conservation Needs Assessment had identified *Telmatobius culeus* as one of the *Telmatobius* species that was at risk of extinction before threats in the wild could be mitigated and had recommended the species for a captive program. Arturo’s proposal meshed with this recommendation and AArk was pleased to be able to provide funding for this initiative.

The relationship that began in 2010 has grown and strengthened over the years and AArk was one of the organizations that Arturo turned to after the massive die off at Lago Menor in 2015. We were able to help provide emergency funds to purchase needed equipment for the captive colony, worked with Arturo on a successful SOS grant that supported expansion of the facility at Cochabamba, and engaged new zoo partners to assist with setting up and maintaining the expanded facility.

Currently AArk is helping to coordinate efforts to conserve the Lake Titicaca Water Frog by facilitating regular conference calls among

all of the organizations involved in both Bolivia and Peru. The calls keep everyone apprised of ongoing activities and have identified important scientific questions that need to be answered as well as focusing efforts on specific action steps that the various groups involved can take.

A recent meeting between the Bolivian and Peruvian governments about Lake Titicaca, including the plight of the Lake Titicaca water frog is an encouraging development in our on-going conservation efforts.

Giving amphibians a voice at CITES CoP17

Saving the world’s amphibians is a priority for **Defenders of Wildlife** and participating in the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is part of our game plan. We were present as an observer to the 17th Conference of the Parties (CoP) to CITES to advocate for amphibian trade proposals alongside representatives from more than 180 countries.

Charismatic African megafauna such as Rhinoceros and Elephants maybe the posterchildren for wildlife trafficking, but amphibians are also hard hit. Out of over 7,550 amphibian species, 400 are traded as pets, food, skin and medicine.

Four million to six million individuals are imported to the United States alone per year, mostly species in the CITES-listed genera *Dendrobates*, *Epipedobates*, *Mantella* and *Ambystoma*, and unlisted genera such as *Limnonectes*, *Fejervarya* and *Centrolenidae*.

At the meetings Defenders supported proposals to protect these species submitted by countries in diverse geographical areas (Asia, Central America, South America, Middle East, Africa) these species inhabit. Defenders distributed factsheets, presented letters in support, staffed a booth to provide additional information and, most important, worked in coalition with

other organizations and experts to provide a complete overview of the critical situation for amphibians.

Unfortunately CITES regulations alone are not enough. We must also work to curb the demand for illegally traded amphibians and address that issue in a single, unified CITES document.



did you know that ?

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities.



Saving amphibians from extinction



did you
know
that ?

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust's amphibian conservation work is conducted through their Saving Amphibians From Extinction - SAFE Programme. Launched just over two years ago SAFE aims to secure the survival of species at ten sites across four priority regions.

To achieve this we work through four program areas. First we must understand the situation of species in the wild (SAFEchecks) which will inform the conservation action necessary including any captive breeding needs (SAFEhavens). We will seek to ensure long-term sustainability and success by developing key

skills in local partners (SAFEguards) and by galvanizing support and collaboration from the international community (SAFEty in numbers).

Durrell is currently involved in projects in three of our four priority areas: Madagascar, Caribbean and the Tropical Andes. Our largest single species project is with the mountain chicken principally on Montserrat through the Mountain Chicken Recovery Programme undertaking pioneering research to try and bring this species back from the verge of extinction. We are working with local NGO's in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti to undertake field surveys to better understand how amphibian communities they are being impacted by habitat change and loss and therefore develop specific

conservation measures. In Madagascar we are working in partnership to build national capacity for amphibian conservation as well as working with individual local groups to undertake field research and build capacity. Lastly, we are supporting the Bolivian Amphibian Initiative in their efforts to conserve the Titicaca Water Frog.

Over the next year, as well as consolidating and building our existing work, we are looking to develop further projects and partnerships in our priority regions particularly the Tropical Andes and our fourth priority area Sri Lanka. For further information please visit www.durrell.org/safe or contact Jeff Dawson jeff.dawson@durrell.org



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Ghana Online Amphibian Literacy Project

SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana, West Africa's first NGO dedicated exclusively to amphibian conservation has launched an interactive online campaign project dubbed Ghana Online Amphibian Literacy (GOAL) Project. GOAL Project is aimed at promoting amphibian knowledge, inspiring interest in amphibian conservation and increasing interactions on social media especially amongst the youth and internet users.

A third of Ghana's amphibian species are threatened with extinction and more than another half have declining populations. For instance, less than 30 individuals of the rare and endangered Giant Squeaker Frog (*Arthroleptis krokosua*) remain in the wild; and the Critically Endangered Togo Slippy Frog (*Conraua derooi*), once abundant in both Togo and Ghana is now restricted to only two streams at Ghana's Atewa Hills

Forest. Most of these declines are as a result of threats propagated by human activities including habitat destruction and pesticide use. Considering the importance of frogs to the environment and humans including the control of mosquitoes therefore, conservation education using all available means is necessary to safeguard the future of these wonderful species.

Social media statistics of Ghana indicate that the average Ghanaian youth spends approximately 105 minutes daily interacting on various social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter being the most patronized. Drawing inspiration from various successful conservation online literacy campaigns including Conservation International's #NatureIsSpeaking, SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana will thus, use its social media platforms (www.facebook.com/SAVETHEFROGS.Gh/ & [**Frogs**\) to educate the youth on amphibian conservation and its related importance.](https://twitter.com/Ghana-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Once a month, spotlight will be thrown on a selected frog's ecology, biology, threats and conservation needs. Links to these blogs will be posted on SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana's various social media pages with an interactive interface where the public can participate in the GOAL Project. One has to follow the first link to read the blog, then click on the competition link to answer questions to stand a chance of winning customized t-shirts, sponsorship to organize Save The Frogs Day, airtime and other souvenirs. Winners will be announced on the last Friday of every month throughout the GOAL Project.

