Meetings

Understanding and Responding to Bd
Jennifer Pramuk, WCS’ Bronx Zoo and Shelly Grow, Association of Zoos & Aquariums

A clearer picture of the science, implications, and control of Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis (Bd; the amphibian chytrid fungus) emerged last month at the conference Amphibian Decline and Chytridiomycosis: Translating Science into Urgent Action. Hosted by Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) November 5-7, 2007 in Tempe, AZ, the speakers and poster presenters embodied the world’s leading experts in amphibian disease and captive management science. Scientists and land managers discussed the specific research and management needs and challenges presented by amphibian disease.

Presentations covered the biology and implications of amphibian disease (Bd is the proximate cause of many amphibian population and species declines and extinctions); disease prevention and strategies to mitigate the spread of Bd in the field; and the natural history, ecology, and global distribution of Bd (it has been reported in 30 states in the US).

Other presentations discussed the role of Bd vectors in the environment such as the often-invasive bullfrog, the disease’s persistence in the environment, and the ability of certain species to coexist with the fungus. Early evidence suggests that some animals that survive Bd infection become resistant to further infections. Treatment protocols discussed included exciting but yet-unpublished data supporting the use of the antibiotic chloramphenicol to eradicate Bd in captive and possibly wild populations. The creation of a repository of worldwide Bd genetic isolates to understand the origin and evolution of the disease as well as GIS mapping projects for disease distribution were discussed.

Participants agreed that additional discussion and research needs included the translation of science into policy recommendations and public outreach. Presentation abstracts and additional information are available at: www.parcplace.org.

The Phoenix Zoo, Houston Zoo and Columbus Zoo & Aquarium helped sponsor the symposium.

AZA Representation at Bd Conference:
Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, Bronx Zoo, Buffalo Zoo, Central Park Zoo, Chicago Zoological Society, Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, Dallas Zoo, Detroit Zoo, Houston Zoo, Jackson Zoological Park, Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, Phoenix Zoo, Saint Louis Zoo, San Diego Zoo, Sedgwick County Zoo, and the AZA executive office.

Funds Awarded
In 2007, AZA’s Conservation Endowment Fund (CEF) and the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund awarded $310,000 to 19 wildlife conservation projects. Over 70 proposals were submitted, and two amphibian conservation projects were funded through this highly competitive process. Congratulations to:

* Houston Zoo for several new components of their ongoing work at “El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center.”

NEW! Support CEF’s new amphibian-specific fund! Make your donation (www.aza.org/yearofthefrog) and start developing your 2008 proposals!

2008 YEAR OF THE FROG

New! Educational Materials Available Soon!
The first of a series of amphibian-themed educational materials, selected by the AZA Conservation Education Committee, and news on how AZA members are launching Year of the Frog on (or around) Leap Day (29 Feb) will be available 7 December at: www.aza.org/yearofthefrog.

Monthly Report Submission Information
Send Monthly Report submissions to Shelly Grow (sgrow@aza.org, 301-562-0777 x263).
News from the Field

Citizen-science and Amphibian Monitoring
Linda Tomas, Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo

On 16 November Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo (CBZ) hosted a training program on citizen-science amphibian monitoring. Representatives from Bergen County Zoo, Buttonwood Park Zoo, Capron Park Zoo, CBZ, Mystic Aquarium, Roger Williams Park Zoo (RWPZ), Trevor Zoo and Zoo New England learned about RWPZ’s participation in the frog and toad call monitoring program “FrogWatch USA” and CPZ’s participation in the Connecticut Amphibian Monitoring Project (CAMP). Each facility present was looking for new ways to involve volunteers in the monitoring of local frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts. The training program included presentations, question and answer periods, and an off-site visit to a CAMP site. Facilities received information about starting similar programs, data collection protocols, volunteer recruitment, frog and toad calls, as well as voucher specimens.

The training program was a result of enthusiastic discussions during the 2 October New England Conservation Collaborative (NECC) meeting. Led by Lou Perrotti, Conservation Programs Coordinator at RWPZ, the meeting was a wrap-up of 2007 projects and an exploration of new initiatives for 2008 Year of the Frog.

Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo has been involved in CAMP since 1997 and has provided volunteers, Site Leaders, and a Site/Block Coordinator. The Zoo works cooperatively with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection at the Kellogg Environment Center and the Ansonia Nature Center. Together, these three facilities monitor amphibians within the Great Hill Block, where volunteers have recorded 194 amphibians representing 14 species! This is just one of thirteen blocks in Connecticut.

Additional information about these two projects will be available soon. For information on Rhode Island Amphibian Monitoring contact Lou Perrotti (Lperrotti@rwpzoo.org). Contact Linda Tomas (Ltomas@beardsleyzoo.org) for information on CAMP.

A CALL TO ACTION

Become an Amphibian Taxon Champion!
The Amphibian TAG is looking for Taxon Champions for *Ascaphus truei, Bufo canorus*, and *Rana pretiosa*. Learn more about Taxon Champions and apply for the positions by searching for the Amphibian TAG in the Members Only version of the AZA Conservation Programs Database at: http://members.aza.org/Departments/cands

Frog Banks for Amphibian Conservation
Purchase a “talking” frog bank to raise funds for amphibian conservation! Based on the frog bank commissioned for the National Amphibian Conservation Center at the Detroit Zoo, these sculptures will be produced by the same artist, Jim Pallas (http://www.ylem.org/artists/jpallas/toad/).

The sculptures “respond” to coin and bill donations. Banks are ~48x15 diameter inches and are made of epoxy fiberglass stones and beads and gold leaf over aluminum foil and a steel frame with LED/photocell sensors, electronics, and speakers.

To receive the banks in time for the Leap Day launch of Year of the Frog, institutions interested in purchasing a bank must contact Andy Snider by 15 December (asnider@fresnochaffeezoo.com). At that time, he will provide an exact price per unit ranging between $2400 each if five are ordered and $1900 each for an order of ten. Institutions must send half the unit’s cost to Andy by 22 Dec. with checks payable to "Amphibian TAG.”

Fresno Chaffee Zoo will donate half their frog bank’s proceeds to the ATAG until the bank has paid back the cost of purchase, at which time all bank proceeds will go to the ATAG. Other institutions are encouraged to do the same. The Detroit Zoo’s sculpture receives around $2000/yr and each sculpture should pay for itself quite quickly.

For more information, contact:
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