Meetings
Species Prioritization Meeting in Fort Worth
The Fort Worth Zoo hosted a meeting of the ATAG steering committee, AZA staff, and several advisors and experts July 30-August 3, 2007. The objective was to provide strategic direction to AZA facilities responding to global amphibian population declines through ex situ conservation.

In accordance with IUCN recommendations to address regional priorities first, critically endangered, endangered, and data deficient species in Canada and the US were examined, as well as species listed under the Endangered Species Act and those with high phylogenetic uniqueness. Captive programs are recommended for the Wyoming toad (Bufo baxteri), Puerto Rican crested toad (Bufo lemur), mountain yellow-legged frog (Rana muscosa), Sierra mountain frog (Rana sierrae), and hellbenders (Cryptobranchus bishopi and C. alleganiensis).

Ex situ programs for critically endangered species in Mexico and the Caribbean were also discussed. The ATAG recommends that interested parties seek additional input from range country experts and governments before initiating new programs, and develop in-range facilities and capacity to accommodate captive populations.

Amphibian Ark developed the prioritization process used with the input of experts worldwide. This was their first opportunity to utilize the prioritization tool in a formal workshop. The process assigns values to answers about new threats, threat mitigation and management, species uniqueness, socio-economic, cultural, and research importance, and more. The outcome is a ranked list of those species most likely to benefit from ex situ captive rearing programs.

We need you! Captive programs do not exist for most of these species; we need YOU to develop the partnerships and husbandry protocols necessary to maintain these species in captivity, and to ensure that in situ efforts address the population’s health in the wild. A report of the list developed will be presented at AZA’s Annual Conference and will also be available on the AZA Web site or by contacting Shelly Grow (301-562-0777 x263, sgrow@aza.org).

Amphibians at AZA’s Annual Conference
Monday (9:00-10:30, Rm 104A): The Amphibian TAG has developed resources (species lists, a conservation resource manual, small grants program) to support your amphibian work.

Tuesday (1:30-3:00, Rm 201A): Edgardo Griffith (Houston Zoo) will share his experiences working on the front lines of the global amphibian crisis during the Zoos Driving Field Conservation session.

Wednesday (1:30-3:00, Rm 201A): Learn about Grassroots Programs for Amphibian Conservation featuring speakers from the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, Central Florida Zoo, National Zoo, and Oglebay’s Good Zoo.

Thursday (8:00-12:00, Exhibit Hall): Stop by TAG Mart and support the Amphibian TAG!

Funds Awarded
In August, Project Golden Frog and the Atelopus Conservation Trust awarded two grants to support the conservation of at-risk harlequin frogs. One award will fund Cleveland Metroparks Zoo’s efforts to evaluate the resistance of Panamanian golden frogs to chytrid, while a second award to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens will fund a pilot project investigating the range-country ex-situ conservation of two Atelopus species in Peru.

Initially planning to award only one grant in 2007, PGF/ACT doubled their commitment due to the urgent nature of emerging amphibian diseases. Learn more about PGF and contribute at: www.ranadorada.org.

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

Amphibian Conservation at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum: Salvage, Captive Breeding, and Reintroduction Programs
Craig Ivanyi, Director of Living Collections & Exhibits

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum has long been dedicated to amphibian conservation in the Sonoran Desert region. Like many other zoos, much of this is through interpretive education. But the Museum also participates in many amphibian conservation initiatives, primarily with ranid frogs. Currently, we contribute staff and facilities to assist with salvage efforts and temporary refuge for several populations of Chiricahua leopard frogs (Rana chiricahuensis). And have also assisted with headstarting Ramsey Canyon leopard frogs (R. subaquavocalis).

Perhaps our most ambitious project has been a collaborative effort to reintroduce the rare Tarahumara frog (R. tarahumareae) to Arizona. This species’ range is restricted to southern Arizona and northwestern Mexico. In 1983, the last U.S. Tarahumara frog was found dead in Arizona. Reintroduction of the species began in 1992 and required collection of Mexican stock, captive breeding of the founders, and surveys of current and historic habitat. It also required the collaboration of two nations, two states, numerous state and federal agencies, universities, private landowners and interested citizens, and jumping over a variety of state and federal hurdles! The project culminated in the release of captive stock into historic Arizona localities between 2004-2006. Though much remains to be learned and the species still faces tremendous challenges here and elsewhere, it is so far persisting and breeding in Arizona once again.

Recently, the Desert Museum (along with the Phoenix Zoo) accepted several Chiricahua leopard frog tadpoles from the Santa Rita Mountains of southeastern Arizona. These may represent the last of their kind from this area. This is the initial stage of an augmentation project for this species in Arizona, similar to what we’ve accomplished with the Tarahumara frog, except that this species still occurs in the U.S. – at least for the time being.

A CALL TO ACTION

Become a Chytrid Conference Sponsor
Many precipitous amphibian population declines and disappearances have been attributed to a fungal disease known as chytridiomycosis (Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis; “Bd”). The “Bd” infectious disease is the worst ever recorded among wildlife in terms of the number of species impacted and the severity of the impact.

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) is putting together an “Amphibian Declines & Chytridiomycosis: Translating Science into Urgent Action" conference to review what is known about Bd, assess scientific priorities and management needs, and identify actions to limit the spread and impact. The conference will be held 5-7 Nov 2007 in Tempe, AZ.

PARC is seeking additional sponsors for this meeting. For more information about sponsorships, contact Priya Nanjappa Mitchell, PARC National State Agencies Coordinator, priya@parcplace.org. Contact Tala Woodward, tala@meyersalterman.com, to be placed on the mailing list for further information as it becomes available.

Which Species Will you Save?
In mid-September, a list of species that would benefit from ex situ captive rearing programs will be made available. This list will provide direction as you launch or expand your amphibian captive rearing programs.

Begin considering your interests, expertise, and resources now. To meet the needs of endangered amphibians in North America, we need facilities to create new programs. This will require examining your facility’s ability to implement practices that would protect species from new diseases, assessing staff skill, matching programs to a timeframe to which you can commit, and reaching out to state and federal agencies. Perhaps you’re ready to take on a species known to be challenging to breed or perhaps you’re more interested in developing protocols on more common surrogate species. Whatever your forte, be ready to get involved! The ATAG is ready to help you, but it’s up to you to lead.