

Meetings

Southwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Holds 2nd Annual Meeting

Craig Ivanyi, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

The Southwest chapter of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation held its 2nd annual meeting at the University of Texas Commons Center, at the J.J. Pickle Research Campus in Austin, Texas, on 5-9 June 2008, with over 60 attendees. The meeting was held jointly with the Horned Lizard Conservation Society (HLCS) & the Texas Herpetological Society (THS). The overarching theme was "Conservation of Herpetofauna on Private Lands." Surprisingly, the amount of private land from state to state within this region varies from 95% or more in Oklahoma and Texas, to 25-35% in Nevada and Arizona. This profoundly impacts how conservation projects are developed and implemented, not to mention the level of success they enjoy.

By necessity, PARC regional meetings are hybrid in nature – part working group and part scientific meeting. Technical sessions were held for the HLCS and the THS. Much of the PARC portion of the meeting focused on the various working groups or task teams, including accomplishments in 2008 and those planned for 2009. Next year, SW PARC plans to focus on SW Habitat Management Guidelines, Inventory & Monitoring, State Herpetological Regulations, developing a regionwide brochure on "Living with Venomous Reptiles," Outreach and Communication Strategies to connect with local herp societies, developing a Southwest Priority Herp Species list, and Development/Habitat Alteration issues. A summary of the meeting can be found at <http://chelydra.unm.edu/swparc/>.

Amphibians at SCB

Almost 200 people attended twelve 4-minute amphibian "speed" presentations at the Society for Conservation Biology's annual meeting in Chattanooga, TN, July 14-17. Topics included the IUCN's Amphibian Conservation Action Plan, *Bd*, 2008 Year of the Frog, species-specific conservation programs, disease in trade, the pet industry and disease, malformations, partnerships, and government monitoring on public lands. AZA, WCS' Bronx Zoo, Zoo Atlanta, and National Zoo were among the presenters and AZA's Shelly Grow organized the session.

NEW RESOURCE AVAILABLE

Amphibian Population Management Guidelines, a document developed out of a workshop sponsored by Amphibian Ark and hosted at the San Diego Zoo in December 2007, provides guidance for managing the genetic diversity of captive populations and is available at: www.amphibianark.org or www.aza.org/ConScience/Amphibians_Intro.



Amphibian Cryobanking Workshop

The survival of amphibians, both *ex situ* and *in situ*, depends on maintaining genetic variation. In rescue populations, this requires holding many hundreds of individuals. Cryopreservation of viable cells offers the opportunity to reduce the number of amphibians needed for rescue populations from hundreds to tens of individuals.

The inaugural meeting of the 'International Bio-Cryo-Bank Network (IBCN)' was held in Trier, Germany June 18-20, 2008, along with an 'AArk Cryobank Program' workshop. Led by Gordon McGregor Reid, co-chair of the AArk and member of the 'Frozen Ark,' discussions focused on establishing an economical, reliable, and secure means to cryobank viable amphibian cells.

The 'AArk Cryobank Program' will work closely with the IBCN and the 'Frozen Ark' consortium, a global conservation initiative to cryobank viable cells from rare and endangered species. Recommendations from the AArk workshop included the distribution of standard protocols, a network of regional centers, quarantine of samples, a database, and a web based forum. Within the AArk program, the storage of sperm and cells from early embryos and other tissues provide the best possibilities for large scale sampling. Robert Browne, AArk Research Officer, will prepare appropriate protocols and supporting documents, and will present these and a discussion forum on the AArk website.

Submitted by: Lesley Dickie, 2008 Year of the Frog Global Campaign Manager, EAZA Executive Director

Send **Monthly Report Submissions** to Shelly Grow (sgrow@aza.org, 301-562-0777 x263).

From the Field

Panama Partnerships for Amphibian Conservation

Eric Baitchman, DVM, Dipl. ACZM, Zoo New England and Paul Crump, Houston Zoo

For the last three years many partners from an assortment of professions have worked together to create the El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center (EVACC) in El Valle de Anton, Panama. EVACC is almost full and the need to expand capacity both in terms of space and expertise is evident. To this end, Zoo New England, the Summit Zoo in Panama City, and the Houston Zoo have partnered to build a modified shipping container to be outfitted and shipped to Panama for use with amphibians at the Summit Zoo.

The 40' container was modified by Mobile Mini, Inc. and includes an HVAC unit, a water heater, a repressurization pump and water storage container, electrical system and a large public viewing window. The complete project budget was \$40,000. The modified container itself cost \$20,000, outfitting the container with shelves, tanks and plumbing cost \$12,000, the remaining



\$8,000 covers shipping to Panama, the container footings, and tying the container into the utility lines. Zoo New England's conservation fund

provided \$25,000, Houston Zoo provided \$15,000, and the Summit Zoo will pay for the operation of the container. If this model is successful, as it has been in Australia, it is hoped this will be the first of many containers shipped to Panama for amphibian conservation.

The purpose of the Summit container is to house and maintain assurance colonies of imperiled amphibians from the central region of Panama. Among the regional priority species that Summit plans to support are an endemic *Atelopus* species and three indigenous Rain frog species.



Link to Kermit's New Amphibian Conservation PSA. Coming soon to: www.yearofthefrog.org.

Visit www.aza.org/YearoftheFrog for outreach materials and to donate to the Amphibian Fund.

A CALL TO ACTION

Texas Amphibians Need Help!

Texas is home to about 70 amphibian taxa, including several endangered species. The Houston Zoo is seeking support for endangered species monitoring projects within the state.

Houston Toad Surveys – Funding is being sought for five automated recording devices called “Frogloggers.” The Houston Toad Recovery Team needs detailed information on the distribution of the toad and these units have the ability to document and estimate the number of calling Houston toads (*Bufo houstonensis*) at a given site over a period of time. These devices are \$1000 each.

Barton Springs Salamander Monitoring – The Barton Springs salamander (*Eurycea sosorum*) occurs at several hydrologically connected sites within the city limits of Austin. \$1500 will fund a full season of bi-monthly monitoring surveys and allow the Austin Watershed Protection and Development Department to get data from a site that is not currently being studied.

Black-spotted Newt Occurrence Fieldwork – The Black-spotted newt (*Notophthalmus meridionalis*) occurs along the coastal and south Texas plains. Due to pollution and habitat modification, it is thought to be endangered. However, range-wide survey work has not been completed in at least twenty years. \$1500 will help fund surveys to detect newts at historical sites and to look for new areas of occurrence.

To learn more about these projects or to offer support, contact Paul Crump at: (713) 533-6594 or pcrump@houstonzoo.org.

Make Amphibian Conservation Activities Count

Amphibian Ark has extended the deadline for responding to their online survey until August 8. The survey will measure the *ex situ* conservation community's response to the amphibian extinction crisis and results will be presented at the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Conservation Breeding Specialist Group meetings in October. Add your contributions at: www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=BEYAs_2fWkKarZ8E9RSQPrzw_3d_3d.