

Meetings

AZA Annual Conference

Andy Snider, Vice-chair of the Amphibian Taxon Advisory Group, led an ATAG reporting session at AZA's Annual Conference on 14 September 2009. Focused on Animal Program updates, the session also included information about a survey that will be issued soon from the Population Management Center focused on data entry for amphibians and a report on Year-of-the-Frog activities, as reported by directors through a survey in Summer 2009.

Joanne Earnhardt, chair of AZA's Reintroduction Scientific Advisory Group, led a round-table discussion on amphibian reintroduction programs and considerations for success. More information about that discussion will be available soon.

FrogWatch USA™

The end of summer brought us to the end of the 2009 FrogWatch USA season. AZA thanks all of the dedicated volunteers who contributed time and energy to provide valuable data this year. Your hard work is greatly appreciated.

To grow participation in FrogWatch USA and to improve both the scientific and educational quality of the program, AZA is encouraging accredited zoos and aquariums to become FrogWatch USA Chapters in 2010. Additional information about becoming a Chapter will be available online soon; the current FrogWatch USA Web pages are under construction. There will also be a FrogWatch USA training session at AZA's Mid-Year Meeting in 2010. Stay tuned for more information.

Thank You Roger Williams Park and AmeriCorps!

AZA would like to thank Roger Williams Park Zoo (RWPZ) for enlisting two AmeriCorps volunteers to work with FrogWatch USA during the 2009 season. Nicole Mann worked with the program February-June and we wish her well in her endeavors in Africa. Mandy Gaudreau worked with the program February-August and has recently received a RWPZ Sophie Danforth Conservation Biology Fund Grant to support her master's degree work on mapping the distribution of *Bd* in Rhode Island.

Frog Releases

Chiricahua Leopard Frogs

On 11 September 2009, 1,393 Chiricahua leopard froglets and tadpoles (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*) were released outside Payson, Ariz., along Ellison Creek in the Tonto National Forest. The tadpoles and froglets were raised at the Phoenix Zoo, after



© Sharon Biggs, Phoenix Zoo

egg masses were brought to the Zoo in May.

Experiments were conducted to determine growth rates in relation to water

temperature; temperatures in the mid-

range resulted in the quickest development. The Phoenix Zoo has been participating in this Recovery Program for over a decade.

Houston Toads

On 21 September 2009, and as a result of rains in Central Texas, 140 Houston toads (*Anaxyrus houstonensis*) raised at the Houston Zoo were released into Bastrop State Park, with another 220 toads released in Austin County. The toads were released into the same ponds they had been collected from as egg strands six months earlier. Since 2007, the Houston Zoo has released about 5,000 Houston toads.

CEF FUNDS AWARDED

In 2009, AZA's Conservation Endowment Fund (CEF) and the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund awarded \$170,000 to nine wildlife conservation projects; four projects received funding from CEF's Amphibian Fund. Over 80 proposals were submitted. All 2009 CEF and Amphibian Fund awards are listed at: www.aza.org/cef-previous-awards/. Next year's application materials will be available in January 2010.

From the Field

Wyoming Toad Program

By Val Hornyak, The Toledo Zoo

It's been a good year so far for the Wyoming Toad Program. In our best collaborative effort to date, eight captive breeding facilities (and their toads) produced tadpoles. From this reproductive success, a total 20,438 *Anaxyrus (Bufo) baxteri* tadpoles and toadlets were released back into the wild at Safe Harbor locations in the Laramie Basin—a new record for the program! This accomplishment was the result of dedication, cooperation, and lots of hard work from members of all facets of the Wyoming Toad Recovery effort.

Summer field surveys, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, were once again conducted in June, July, and August at Mortenson Lake, the stronghold of the toad in the wild. Volunteers from



© Sarah Armstrong, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo

AZA zoos, USFWS, Wyoming Game and Fish, Bureau of Land Management, and other entities were trained by USFWS personnel to weigh, measure, swab, and otherwise check and document the toad population at Mortenson. No releases have been done at this

location since *Bd* was discovered there in 2002. While *Bd* surely contributed to the earlier decline of these toads, this critical population seems to have rallied and is persevering (and reproducing) despite the continued presence of *Bd* at this site.

The annual SSP meetings are held in Wyoming during the July survey week. This gives SSP participants and other partners in the program the opportunity to spend time with each other while they immerse themselves (sometimes literally) in the natural environment of the toad. Molly Messick from Wyoming Public Radio joined us in the field during the July surveys. She witnessed toadlet releases at a Safe Harbor site and interviewed survey teams as she developed her story about the saga of the Wyoming toad at Mortenson Lake. The resulting report was broadcast on WPR and picked up by National Public Radio, giving the Wyoming Toad and the Recovery Program both regional and national attention. For more information about the volunteer surveys or the Wyoming Toad SSP, contact Val Hornyak, Acting Species Coordinator, at val.hornyak@toledozoo.org or go to the new Wyoming toad Web site, www.wyomingtoad.org.



The successful Amphibian Ark 2008 Year of the Frog campaign brought news of the amphibian crisis to the masses and began to catalyze an organized, global response. Scientists and conservationists around the world learned a great deal about the state of amphibians on a global level and are organizing to attack the threats facing these very important and diverse creatures. This is only the beginning and there is much to do.

We are happy to announce that Amphibian Ark is now a formal membership organization open to ANYONE interested in keeping amphibians on the planet. Boarding the Ark does not require that you work at a zoo, hold a PhD or bring in a six-figure income. Anyone can be a part! Join us in helping to save amphibians, a challenge that will ultimately be quite important to all.

Your support is critical to help us reach our goals and protect species on the brink. Please visit www.amphibianark.org/membership.htm and join us today. For more information please contact Kevin Johnson, Communications Director, Amphibian Ark at kevinj@amphibianark.org.

Notable Layings/Hatchings

For the second time this year, *Plethodon glutinosus* laid eggs at the Toledo Zoo (below, top) in public view. A clutch of *Desmognathus welteri* hatched late August/early September (bottom).



Photo credits:
R. Andrew Odum,
Toledo Zoo