

2008

# YEAR OF THE FROG



© DANA PAYNE



© DANTE B. FENOLIO/PHOTORESEARCHERS/ANOTHECA IMAGES



© JEFF LEMM



© TARA SPRANKLE

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is preparing to make 2008 the Year of the Frog. Together with the Amphibian Ark, WAZA and other regional zoological associations, this global effort will bring worldwide attention and support for the critical work of zoos and aquariums in amphibian conservation.

AZA's National Awareness Committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Jackie Ogden, has already convened a Year of the Frog Task Force comprised of representatives from the Amphibian Taxon Advisory Group, the Conservation Education Committee, the Marketing Committee, the Public Relations Committee and AZA staff.

Planning is fully underway at AZA and we want to give you as much information as possible to help you plan your amphibian conservation and Year of the Frog participation.

## OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Our goals are clear:

- To provide you with tools to effectively address the amphibian conservation crisis, including conservation and best practices information and increased resources to build your amphibian programs.
- To deliver value to you, our members, in the form of positive visibility, increased attendance and greater resources.

AZA's Year of the Frog campaign is broken out into four strategic initiatives. We will develop:

- Conservation Resources – To assist AZA members in every aspect of amphibian conservation.
- Best Practices Resources – To assist AZA members in developing captive assurance populations.
- Grassroots Advocacy – To build a grassroots movement to institutionalize government support.
- Public Engagement – To energize the public to support amphibian conservation.

## CONSERVATION

The first step we are taking is to determine which amphibian species can most benefit from our unique resources and expertise. To that end, AZA's Amphibian Taxon Advisory Group's (ATAG) steering committee members, select amphibian experts, government representatives, and AZA's conservation biologist convened for an amphibian species prioritization meeting July 30-August 1, 2007 at the Fort Worth Zoo in Fort Worth, Texas. This initial meeting focused on conservation prioritization for North American species.

The outcome of this three-day meeting, available soon, will be a comprehensive species priority list that will be used to plan, coordinate, and implement amphibian conservation efforts throughout the AZA community. A second outcome of our meeting was newly trained Amphibian Ark facilitators ready to conduct similar species prioritization meetings around the globe.

## BEST PRACTICES

Our best practices efforts will focus on providing you with practical guidance and information to expand your amphibian conservation programs. The AZA staff and ATAG are develop-

ing a best practices manual that will build on the hard work of many scientists and partners. This document will make it easier to implement a conservation program for the key Western Hemisphere species identified as priorities for AZA institutions.

## GRASSROOTS OUTREACH

AZA is working to develop a more robust government relations agenda on all fronts, and the pursuit of federal and state policies and funding to help critically endangered North American amphibians is high on our list. Critical to this effort will be citizens, including zoo and aquarium visitors, who are looking for a way to get involved in the public policy process. To meet this challenge, AZA will build a Web-based grassroots network of citizen "Amphibian Advocates." After people sign-up on the AZA site, we will provide them with ongoing information about our campaign and how they can communicate with lawmakers.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Our Year of the Frog public education campaign will have three key elements. We will:

- Give AZA members the tools to engage 150 million visitors
- Generate public support for AZA member conservation projects
- Highlight the significant work of AZA institutions to the media

## EDUCATION TOOLS

The Conservation Education Committee (CEC) is already hard at work gathering, evaluating and creating materials for your use. Year of the Frog education materials will support your zoo and aquarium educators and event organizers as they conduct teacher workshops, on-site education programs, and special events. These materials, which will be tied in to the global campaign, will be free to all AZA members and can be used year-round.

Once the public learns about the amphibian conservation crisis, we want to inspire personal action to help solve the problem. These actions include supporting your local zoo or

CONTINUED, PAGE 22

## NEW RESOURCES

The "Amphibian Conservation Action Plan: Proceedings of the IUCN/SSC Amphibian Conservation Summit 2005" is available at: [www.amphibians.org/newsletter/ACAP.pdf](http://www.amphibians.org/newsletter/ACAP.pdf)

The final Chiricahua leopard frog (*Rana chiricahuensis*) recovery plan is available at: [www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/SpeciesDocs/CLF/Final\\_CLF\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/SpeciesDocs/CLF/Final_CLF_Plan.pdf).

The Institute of Laboratory Animal Research's (ILAR) most recent Journal (vol. 48, no. 3) focuses on amphibian research, husbandry, lab facilities, reproduction, and disease and can be purchased at: [http://dels.nas.edu/ilar\\_n/ilarjournal/journal.shtml](http://dels.nas.edu/ilar_n/ilarjournal/journal.shtml).



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### *Safeguarding Panama's Amphibians*

Bill Konstant, Houston Zoo

Thanks to logistic and financial support provided by more than two dozen AZA institutions, a native amphibian rescue mission is well underway in Panama with the goal of safeguarding threatened species from an advancing chytrid epidemic. The El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center (EVACC) is now providing safe haven for numerous frogs, toads, and salamanders. In fact, according to project directors Edgardo Griffith and Heidi Ross, the following noteworthy species have taken reproduction beyond the stage of amplexus:

**Lemur leaf frog (*Hylomantis lemur*):** Dozens of clutches have filled five aquariums with tadpoles; the oldest are currently growing hind legs.

**Leopard robber frog (*Eleutherodactylus pardalis*):** Tadpoles have hatched from four of eight egg clutches. Feeding the froglets a diet of springtails may help keep them alive.

**Dink or common tink frog (*Eleutherodactylus diastema*):** A single female has produced three egg clutches of eggs; the first yielded 11 tadpoles.

**Horned marsupial frog (*Gastrotheca cornuta*):** One clutch contained nine froglets, six of which survived after emerging from the female's pouch. They are faring well thus far on wild-caught food.

**Spiny-headed treefrog (*Anotheca spinosa*):** four tadpoles recently metamorphosed.

**Green and black poison frog (*Dendrobates auratus*):** Nine eggs have yielded three tadpoles thus far.

**Hemiphractus fasciatus:** Two females are now carrying eggs on their backs.

One fertilized clutch has been produced by a pair of Bob's robber frogs (*Craugastor punctariolus*), but the eggs failed to hatch. Another clutch from a female *Hylinobatrachium vireovittatum* produced tadpoles, but they died within days. Three species have produced unfertile clutches of eggs since being moved to EVACC: the Panamanian golden frog (*Atelopus zeteki*), *Craugastor melanostictus* and *Eleutherodactylus moro*.

aquarium, engaging in neighborhood/backyard conservation projects, or making a donation.

## REACHING THE NEWS MEDIA

One critical area for our partnership with Amphibian Ark, WAZA and other regions will be a coordinated effort to use the news media to reach the public. The power of a global outreach campaign is clear and the good news is that many zoos and aquariums are doing much for amphibian conservation.

We are organizing Association-wide efforts to promote AZA's Year of the Frog, including:

- An attention-getting celebration on 29 February 2008 – Leap Day. This event will allow us to provide a focal point for the media and potential corporate sponsors.
- Special Year of the Frog activities in AZA's *Party for the Planet™* Conservation Made Simple tool kit.
- A Year of the Frog themed *CONNECT* magazine and regular *CONNECT* updates.
- A Public Service Announcement (PSA) to generate attention and support.
- A robust Year of the Frog Web presence: [www.aza.org/yearofthefrog](http://www.aza.org/yearofthefrog).

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW!

A major Year of the Frog session is planned for the Annual Conference in Philadelphia ([www.aza.org/ConfWork/AC\\_Intro/](http://www.aza.org/ConfWork/AC_Intro/)). In the meantime, please consider taking the following steps now to support our collective effort:

**Build It** – We ask that you consider increasing your capacity to maintain captive assurance populations of amphibians. AZA has hired a full time conservation biologist for amphibians, Shelly Grow, [sgrow@aza.org](mailto:sgrow@aza.org). She, the ATAG, and the entire AZA staff are prepared to assist you with your conservation efforts.

**Save The Dates** – Please plan on hosting a special event at your institution on Leap Day (29 February 2008) to help us engage the public in the Year of the Frog. And, please plan to hold a *Party for the Planet™* on or around 22 April 2008, so that AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums can continue to take ownership of Earth Day.

**Get Smart** – This year, we already doubled the capacity of AZA's Amphibian Biology & Management Course by offering the course twice. The October 13-18, 2007 course at the Toledo Zoo is already full, but registration for the April 12-18, 2008 course is now open. Information can be found at [www.aza.org/prodev/Amphibians/](http://www.aza.org/prodev/Amphibians/).

**Stay Tuned** – Please visit for updates about our growing Year of the Frog effort and link your Web site to [www.aza.org/yearofthefrog](http://www.aza.org/yearofthefrog).

**Communicate** – The key to a successful AZA campaign will be communication. Please share with us your amphibian conservation success stories, education activities and planned events so that we can share them with your colleagues and incorporate them into the global Year of the Frog effort.

AZA is committed to making the 2008 Year of the Frog campaign a success. This is a tremendous opportunity to join with our global partners in making an important difference in amphibian conservation.