SAFE
SAVING AMPHIBIANS FROM EXTINCTION

Durrell’s Global Amphibian Programme Strategy 2014 – 2020

Preventing a catastrophe for amphibians worldwide

dsurrell
Amphibians in crisis

Amphibians are the most threatened vertebrate group in the world with over 40% of all known species believed to be threatened with extinction.

As for many species habitat loss is the primary threat for amphibians globally. In addition, amphibians are being decimated by the greatest current disease threat facing any vertebrate group, the deadly fungal disease chytridiomycosis or chytrid.

In the face of these threats and others 950 species require some form of captive intervention to ensure their survival but only around 50 are currently receiving this type of help.

Why save amphibians

Amphibians are vital to planet Earth - they are pivotal members of their natural communities, both as prey and predators and are hugely important in maintaining healthy forests and wetlands.

Many species have significant pharmacological importance including pain relief and anti-cancer drugs with others providing important medical insights and advances. This begs the question of what potential medicinal benefits and information may be lost as more amphibians go extinct?

What cannot be forgotten is amphibians’ intrinsic value as members of the wonderful diversity of life and the connection they have with many people.

If the scale of our response remains the same as it has been over the last 20 years, then we will witness the amphibian crisis turning into the amphibian catastrophe

Durrell can make a difference

Durrell has a wealth of experience in field conservation, captive management and training underpinned and guided by the best science.

This is reflected in a successful track record in amphibian conservation beginning with saving the Mallorcan midwife toad - the only amphibian to be downgraded from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

When the Montserrat mountain chicken frog was on the edge of extinction, we were the first people to be called and mobilised our team within 10 days to effect an emergency response. We stabilised the situation and five years on we are part of a coordinated effort to ensure this species does not disappear forever.

Durrell’s vast experience working with the zoo community, conservation organisations, local communities and governments gives us the know-how to deliver effective amphibian conservation at scale and do our bit to prevent this crisis before it is too late.

Our amphibian aspiration

A situation where the most threatened amphibians at ten global priority sites are now SAFE thanks to conservation efforts led by capable local institutions in partnership with the zoo and conservation communities. These projects will act as models for the global conservation community to replicate for amphibians worldwide.

Our 2020 mission

By 2020 we will secure the survival of amphibian species at ten sites across four of the world’s highest priority regions for amphibian conservation.

The plight of the world’s amphibians is not just theirs, but ours as well … because the threats that imperil them are those that stem from our actions and will be no less detrimental to our own livelihoods…

Russell A. Mittermeier, 2008, President Conservation International
Our priority regions

We will ensure amphibians are SAFE in four priority regions. These represent regions where there is high amphibian extinction risk and where Durrell has previous experience through our field or training programmes.

- **Madagascar** Third greatest number of endemic amphibians in the world
- **Western Caribbean** Greatest proportion of threatened amphibians in the world
- **Sri Lanka** Over 75% of amphibian species threatened with extinction
- **Tropical Andes** Greatest number of threatened amphibians in the world

“Frogs do for the night what birds do for the day ... they give it a voice. And that voice is a varied and stirring thing that ought to be better known.”

Archie Carr, 1973, Zoologist

Route to success

To ensure amphibians are SAFE we will progress through four stages. First we must understand the situation of species in the wild (SAFEchecks) which will inform our conservation actions including the captive breeding needs (SAFEhavens).

We will seek to ensure long term sustainability and success by developing key skills in local partners (SAFEguards) and by galvanising support and collaboration from the international community (SAFEty in numbers)

Applying SAFEchecks

- For many threatened amphibian species very little is known and the essential first stage is to identify those species most in need: where they are found, what are their habitat needs and what responses are required.
- As pioneers in our field Durrell has extensive expertise in collecting information on lesser known threatened species in remote regions. Working with local partners, we will carry out expeditions to conduct surveys and targeted research.
- Armed with this information, we will work with partners to identify priority actions both for the species and to build local capacity to lead future conservation efforts.

Establishing SAFEhavens

- Long-term survival is imperative and until the threats in the wild can be addressed we will immediately establish captive breeding programmes for many of the species at risk.
- Our extensive expertise in the captive management of threatened amphibians means we will identify those species most in need and make immediate decisions on whether species can be maintained in-country or require overseas facilities.
- We will maintain our track record of working closely with key government and non-governmental partners to develop and share breeding plans and husbandry guidelines.
- Working with staff in different breeding facilities we will enable the exchange of skills and experience, whether it is through staff spending time at different in-country centres or at our Wildlife Park in Jersey.
- Developing a Durrell Amphibian Centre of Excellence for Research and Conservation will enhance our ability to undertake pioneering captive breeding programmes and deliver associated training to the widest possible range of people.
Building SAFEguards

• Developing in-country capacity is the key to successful, sustainable, long-term conservation. Through Durrell’s Conservation Academy we will carry out detailed assessments of training, skills and development needs within our local partner organisations.

• We will identify, develop and deliver the most appropriate training interventions to meet the needs and wishes of our local partner organisations. Assessing the changes these interventions bring, will improve both our local partners and our future capacity development work.

• Working closely with local partners we can monitor change and steps towards success, handing over the reins of projects at the appropriate stage.

Promoting SAFETY in numbers

• The importance of amphibian conservation has languished for too long within global political and conservation processes. It is now vital that we raise the profile and highlight the value and urgency of amphibian conservation.

• Our success stories will provide a model to be replicated by other institutions within our priority regions and worldwide, and we will share all knowledge generated through these innovative programmes.

• It doesn’t end here – and we will actively contribute to ongoing global initiatives for amphibians including the Amphibian Survival Alliance and the Amphibian Ark.

Why we need your help

40% of all known amphibian species are threatened with extinction. With our track record of working with amphibians we can do something to reverse this trend, but we need your help. Please make a donation today to support our work in four regions around the world, and be part of the team ensuring these animals do not disappear forever.

But we recognise we need to be able to demonstrate the return on your investment in us and the amphibians we are trying to save – and we have robust monitoring and evaluation systems to do this. Through our multi-channel Durrell-Donor engagement programme we want to bring you closer to the action. We will provide you with rich data and information on the how you are making a positive difference for the world’s most threatened amphibians.

What your funds will mean for amphibians

£10,000 Enable a year-long chytrid monitoring programme to be conducted at Ankaratra, Madagascar: a globally important amphibian site

£20,000 Run an amphibian focussed regional training course.

£50,000 Enable the management, coordination and continued development of the programme for a year.

£100,000 Fund critical field and captive breeding activities and enable dedicated in-country coordinators to be in place in all four regions for a year.

£500,000 Provide a significant proportion for the development of an “Amphibian Centre of Excellence for Research and Conservation

The catastrophic decline and extinction of amphibians is on a scale quite unlike anything we have ever witnessed before

Simon Stuart, 2006
Head IUCN Species Survival Commission

It would be hard to think of a more crucial duty for humans than helping to preserve the wondrous diversity of life on our own planet. I know of no other organisation that works more devotedly or imaginatively toward that goal than Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust - which is why I am proud and pleased to support it.

Bill Bryson, Author
Meet the Team

Jeff Dawson, Amphibian Programme Officer: Jeff is responsible for the overall development and coordination of Durrell’s amphibian programme and its projects.

Andrew Terry, Head of Field Programmes: Andrew has oversight for all of Durrell’s field programmes.

Matt Goetz, Head of Herpetology: Matt head's up Durrell’s herpetology department and captive breeding programmes.

Richard Young, Head of Conservation Science: Richard provides research and technical expertise to Durrell's conservation programmes.

Tsanta Rakotonanahary, Madagascar Programme Vet: Tsanta represents Durrell in the National Chytrid Emergency Cell, the national coordinating body, bringing disease expertise as well as field skills.

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