

Executive Summary of the CBSG / WAZA Amphibian *Ex situ* Conservation Planning Workshop, El Valle, Panama, 12-15 February 2006

Citation : Zippel, K., R. Lacy, and O. Byers (eds.) 2006. *CBSG/WAZA Amphibian Ex Situ Conservation Planning Workshop Final Report*. IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA.

From 17-19 September 2005, the IUCN hosted an Amphibian Conservation Summit in Washington, DC. The world's amphibian authorities from academia, zoos, government, veterinary medicine, and other diverse disciplines convened to conceptualize an Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP), outlining general responses required in the fields of research, assessment, conservation, and rapid response to stem widespread global amphibian extinctions.

The IUCN/SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG), the organization overseeing implementation of the ACAP, specifically tasked the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) with implementation of the *ex situ* aspects of ACAP's goals.

From 12-15 February 2006, CBSG and WAZA hosted an Amphibian *Ex Situ* Conservation Planning Workshop in El Valle, Panama. Unlike the prior meeting in Washington DC, this group called upon only those amphibian biologists with expertise in the issues surrounding captive maintenance of amphibians. Fifty such people from 14 countries representing every amphibian-inhabited continent divided into four working groups to develop strategies for **Organization** of the *ex situ* community, **Best Practices** for husbandry and quarantine, developing objective criteria for **Species Selection**, and conceptually organizing **Rapid Response Programs**.

Major Conclusions

Organization: An administrative structure was proposed in which the *ex situ* community would liaise with the larger Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) through an advisory board consisting of representatives from CBSG and WAZA, among others. The advisory board would, among other tasks, develop and monitor strategies for implementing the *ex situ* part of the initiative in coordination with the *in situ* component, direct fundraising activities, and ensure excellent communication with all stakeholders. The advisory board and the WAZA executive director would oversee the activities of an Amphibian Program Officer, who would in turn provide advice to implementing partners in the *ex situ* community regarding knowledge and technology transfer, breeding programs, regional coordination, and species priorities.

Best Practices: Standards are provided for the *ex situ* housing and maintenance of amphibians and recommendations made for fostering community involvement. These husbandry standards are designed to ensure the highest quality of care for captive amphibians, to minimize the transmission of disease between captive species, and to prevent the introduction of exotic pathogens into novel environments. They are intended to be general

husbandry guidelines. Specific protocols will be determined by the individual species selection process.

Species Selection: A Decision Tree was constructed to quantify the appropriateness for a given species to be included in an *ex situ* program. Phase One of the Decision Tree ensures there is justification for an *ex situ* program. It consists of three fundamental questions with "yes" or "no" answers. These questions should be applied to the taxon under consideration, answering each honestly and objectively. Phase Two of the Decision Tree takes those species that have 'passed' Phase One and attempts to prioritize them, i.e., with limited resources (space, staff, money etc.) which species should have *ex situ* programs established ahead of others. It takes the form of a series of questions with weighted scores. The total score for a species indicates how 'important' an *ex situ* program for the species is in relation to others. Some questions may not be straightforward to answer and will require consultation with colleagues, taxonomic experts and other individuals/groups working with the species. Phase Three of the Decision Tree considers the practical feasibility of initiating and maintaining an *ex situ* program once justified and considered a priority.

Rapid Response Programs: Rapid response programs deliver basic protocol and capacity to countries facing amphibian crises. These protocols must be flexible in nature to respond to crises deriving from causes as disparate as disease, habitat loss, contamination, climate change, etc. This will require identification of secure funding and dedicated staff to devise and implement the response program defined below. The purpose of these programs is to establish basic *ex situ* amphibian operations during the suggested time required while permanent capacity for *ex situ* operations is developed in the range country. This purpose directly addresses the common problem of delays in conservation action that result from insufficient capacity in range countries, and ties directly to commitments to build permanent capacity in those countries. Key elements of these programs will include identifying and training of national citizens and agencies in all aspects of *ex situ* programs, for example: husbandry, veterinary, management, fund raising, and public education. Successful implementation of programs will require fluid communication at all levels between IUCN, ASG, national governments, and local citizens in affected areas.

The Working Group Reports compiled into a single document represent the *ex situ* community's plan to address the *ex situ* conservation components of the ACAP. The *ex situ* community will collectively form an ASG Thematic Working Group (yet to be named) and will implement this plan. We anticipate the next steps will be workshop participants presenting these results for consideration at their regional meetings, followed shortly by regional species selection workshops in collaboration with ASG/GAA members.

Subsequently a full time Amphibian Program Officer for CBSG/WAZA was hired. Here is a typical monthly report.

Amphibian Activity Report

To: Bob Lacy, CBSG Chairman; Onnie Byers, CBSG Executive Director; Gordon Reid, WAZA Amphibian Coordinator; Peter Dollinger, WAZA Executive Director
From: Kevin Zippel, CBSG/WAZA Amphibian Program Officer
Subject: Monthly performance report for May 2006 **Date:** 31 May 2006

Current

Turned fulltime (as of 21 May)

- retired from teaching college Bio, went fulltime for CBSG/WAZA!

Amphibian *Ex Situ* Conservation Workshop (Panama 11-15 February)

- Organizational Structure and Species Prioritization concerns unresolved
- resolution meeting planned for 1-2 June
- circulated Workshop Report draft to initial reviewers, assimilating comments

AZA Amphibian Biology & Management course (Toledo 17-23 April)

- wrote summary, sent to Bruce Carr for Communiqué

Amphibian Conservation Primer for Directors

- sent on to AZA, modified, circulated

Liz Claiborne grant application

- new draft submitted to Onnie
- lack of organizational structure to *ex situ* community makes it difficult to formulate plan; progress after DC meeting

Potential American Amphibian Conservation Center run by US Zoo Consortium

- planning organizational meeting at Zoo Atlanta on 23 June

Panama rescue effort

- call to arms to zoo directors for financial and logistical support circulated, following primer
- starting to manage resources (coordinate keepers, direct funds) with Houston Zoo
- recovery begins 5 June

Project Golden Frog (PGF)

- Coordinating with Panama rescue effort to simultaneously collect additional golden frogs

IUCN-SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG)

- Contributing to GEF proposal wherever asked (summaries, conference calls, etc.)
- helped draft questionnaire for *ex situ* community to detail areas of activity that might help leverage matching funds through GEF grant, circulated to *ex situ* contacts

Amphibian Biology & Management course - Mexico (Puebla 22-26 May)

- Instructor in several lectures and workshops; the entire course went off wonderfully
- Gladly answering a barrage of emails from students asking follow-up questions on course topics, projects, opportunities, etc.

Working with Linda Malek on fundraising

- trying to develop marketable packaging to raise funds for *ex situ* centers and training workshops

Random Bits

- Taught continuing education course on habitat restoration/native flora at local school
- Applied for position on local watershed protection board
- Found toads breeding in 3 of 3 ponds created locally last year for that purpose
- Potential Biology/Management course at Cali Zoo; planning fundraising through CBOT
- Answering dozens of email queries regarding amphibian conservation, directions, etc.

Future Endeavors

ASG Planning meeting (DC 1-2 June)

- resolve organization and species prioritization issues

Kihansi Spray Toad 'Recovery Plan Meeting' (Bronx 7-8 June)

- push for PHVA and Biology/Management course in Tanzania

American Amphibian Conservation Center Planning Meeting (Atlanta 23 June)

- feasibility discussions with southeast zoo consortium, hopefully leading to modified proposal for sponsors

Hellbender PHVA (St. Louis 7-10 August)

- work with Onnie to facilitate

CBSG Annual Meeting (Leipzig 25-27 August)

- Lead major session on amphibians with a background presentation on the situation and progress made by the CBSG/WAZA initiative (and others) to date, followed by several speakers who will highlight their work as a region, an individual zoo, or a partnership, to respond to the crisis. Plan for a working group on a topic that needs attention at that time

Madagascar Conservation Meeting (Antananarivo 18-21? September)

- Prepare to present on role of *ex situ* community in Malagasy amphibian conservation

AZA Annual Conference (Tampa 25-30 September)

- Prepare to present on role of *ex situ* community in amphibian conservation

Zoos and Aquariums Committing to Conservation (ZACC; Houston 26-31 January 2007)

- Prepare to present on role of *ex situ* community in amphibian conservation