



Over-collection and the Global Amphibian Crisis

With dramatic declines reported worldwide due to habitat loss, pollution, disease and climate change, amphibians are among the most imperiled animals on the planet. According to the IUCN *Red List of Threatened Species*, one third of all amphibian species are endangered or threatened.¹ Our appetite for frog legs and demand for unusual pets has led to over-collection and illegal collection and trade of amphibians, including the five species pictured on this fact sheet. Immediate action is needed to regulate this additional threat to amphibian survival.



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Endangered blue-sided tree frog (*Agalychnis annae*)

Stop the unsustainable collection of frogs and salamanders before more species disappear forever.



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Critically endangered Rancho Grande harlequin frog (*Atelopus cruciger*)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN AMPHIBIANS HAS GROWN IN THE PAST 20 YEARS, SHIFTING FROM SEASONAL COLLECTION FOR LOCAL CONSUMERS TO YEAR-ROUND COLLECTION FOR GLOBAL MARKETS.

- With 200 million to more than 1 billion consumed worldwide each year, frogs are literally being eaten to extinction.²
- Consumer demand is highest in the United States and Europe, especially for frog legs and amphibian pets.
- Amphibians are mostly collected for the pet trade and medical use in Asia, South America and Central America.
- In South America, some recipes call for as many as 30 frogs for a single dish.³
- Trade in amphibians is a factor in the spread of *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd) pathogen, which, though harmless to humans, is deadly to frogs and toads and is driving many populations to extinction.

1. Stuart S.N., et al. (2004). "Status and trends of amphibian declines and extinctions worldwide." *Science* 306:1783-1786.

2. Warkentin, I. G., D. Bickford, N.S. Sodhi, C.J.A. Bradshaw. (2009). "Eating Frogs to Extinction." *Conservation Biology*. 2009.

3. Black, R. "Hunting threat to big amphibians." BBC News Online, 19 September 2005. Available at news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4259596.stm.

**THE SPECIES SURVIVAL NETWORK (SSN)
RECOMMENDS:**

- Parties consider submitting CITES proposals to list amphibian species jeopardized by international trade.
- Exporting Parties consider adopting new laws and regulations to protect amphibians and their habitats and to ensure that collection for international trade does not threaten them.
- Range States enforce and strengthen existing laws that protect amphibians and their habitats.
- Parties work to stop the spread of Bd through international trade by adopting the standards for trade in certain amphibian species contained in chapter 2.4.1. of the Aquatic Animal Health Code 2008 of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).⁴
- Parties and the conservation community raise awareness among the public and in the food, traditional medicine and pet trade industries about the threat to amphibians and their habitat.

Amphibians play a vital role in their ecosystems. They are food for snakes and birds and help control insect populations. If collected at unsustainable levels, their roles in their ecosystems will be diminished. Amphibians also have aesthetic and socio-cultural value and are important to medical research. Amphibian-based substances have led to the development of pain killers, antibiotics, cancer treatments and other drugs.⁵ Drastic population declines and extinctions of amphibians compromise the potential for additional medical discoveries.



Critically endangered black-eyed tree frog
(*Agalychnis moreletii*)



Near threatened Alta Verapaz salamandar
(*Bolitoglossa dofleini*)



Critically endangered Kaiser's spotted newt
(*Neurergus kaiseri*)

For more information visit:

www.defenders.org/programs_and_policy/international_conservation/amphibians.php

www.ssn.org

Alejandra Goyenechea, Defenders of Wildlife
Chair of the Amphibian Working Group
Species Survival Network (SSN)
agoyenechea@defenders.org

4. Available at http://www.oie.int/eng/normes/fcode/en_chapitre_2.4.1.pdf.

5. Chivian, E., A. Bernstein. 2008. *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK