

IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group

2020 Report



Ariadne Angulo



Phil Bishop

Co-Chairs

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Location/Affiliation

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Number of members

425

Social networks

Facebook: IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group
Twitter: @ASG_IUCN
Website: <https://www.iucn-amphibians.org/>



Mission statement

The Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) provides the scientific foundation to inform effective amphibian conservation action around the world. More specifically, the ASG stimulates, develops and conducts scientific research to inform the conservation of amphibians and their habitats around the world, supports the assessment of the conservation status of amphibian biodiversity and informs the general public of amphibian conservation-related issues and priorities. This is attained by supporting and mobilising a global network of members to develop capacity, improve coordination and integration so as to achieve shared, strategic amphibian conservation goals.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

At the ASG membership level, we envision a more proactive and engaged specialist group, with greater participation and more cross-pollination within and between regions and thematic groups. We expected to conclude the update of global amphibian assessments on The IUCN Red List (GAA2) and the update of the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan in 2020, but both of these deliverables were impacted by the pandemic.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Green List: the ASG Red List Authority (RLA) provides technical feedback and expertise to the Red List Committee and Red List Technical Working Group, as necessary.

Proposal development and funding: ASG has a fully funded Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA2) update project.

Red List: (1) completion of the Global Amphibian Assessment update (GAA2); (2) the ASG Red List Authority (RLA) provides advice and expertise for national Red List processes.

Research activities: (1) ASG supports the update of Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites; (2) ASG actively contributes to the production of scientific publications related to amphibian research and conservation.

Plan

Planning: (1) ASG Secretariat, Regional Chairs and members contribute towards single- or multi-species conservation action plans at the international or national levels; (2) update of the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP); (3) completion of Amphibian Reintroduction Guidelines; (4) a framework for single- and multi-species amphibian action planning is created through collaboration with the Conservation Planning Specialist Group's efforts to develop multi-species planning guidance.

Policy: ASG provides scientific advice and information for the identification and conservation of species of concern in national and international contexts.



Least Concern *Ranitomeya flavovittata*
Photo: Ariadne Angulo

Act

Proposal development and funding: increasing uptake of the ACAP among donors.

Technical advice: ASG provides technical advice to organisations and institutions globally.

Network

Agreements: ASG has donors that provide financial and institutional support to ASG RLA staff time.

Capacity building: (1) development of the Grant Writing Mentorship Program; (2) ASG RLA will provide Red List training through its Red List workshops and other venues when the opportunity arises; training day(s) may be open to the public or an audience wider than amphibian experts.

Membership: (1) ASG membership and regional and thematic leadership are renewed, new members are brought on board and regional representation is improved; (2) ASG proactively recruits new members, focusing on regions with little or no representation at the start of the quadrennium.

Proposal development and funding: ASG has donors that provide financial and institutional support to ASG staff time.

Synergy: (1) ASG is a key ally of Amphibian Ark and the Amphibian Survival Alliance with the shared vision of "Amphibians thriving in nature"; (2) ASG has a Strategic Plan for the remainder of the 2017–2020 quadrennium.

Communicate

Communication: (1) ASG reports its activities to SSC DATA; (2) ASG will participate in, and in some cases organise, public presentations to communicate the work of IUCN, SSC, ASG, and the Red List; (3) ASG will develop and launch its own website (we have shared our site with the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) since 2013) to continue providing information about our work and amphibian conservation globally; (4) the IUCN Red List is used to inform the project and funding priorities of NGOs and funding mechanisms with the aim of ensuring that effective amphibian conservation is taking place globally; (5) ASG develops a communications plan that will lay out the intended use of each of its communications tools (email, *FrogLog*, website, social media [Facebook, Twitter]); (6) together with ASA, ASG continues to produce *FrogLog*.

Research activities: maintain the Halliday-Bishop Conservation Library, a regularly updated reference list of amphibian conservation literature.

Scientific meetings: (1) ASG actively participates in scientific meetings; (2) ASG actively contributes to the organisation of scientific meetings; (3) ASG will participate in, and in some cases organise, symposia to communicate the work of IUCN, SSC, ASG, and the Red List.



Least Concern Black-spotted Rock Frog, *Staurois guttatus*
Photo: Debbie Bishop



Amael Borzee tracking
Photo: Yoonjung Yi

Activities and results 2020

Assess

Green List

i. ASG members provided preliminary Green List assessments for four highly threatened priority species. (KSR #11)

Red List

i. The Amphibian RLA increased the number of up-to-date assessments by 1,621. As of 31 December 2020, there are now 5,295 amphibian species with recent assessments on the Red List. (KSR #2)

ii. We supported national Red List processes in Mozambique, Kenya and Australia in 2020. (KSR #2)

iii. The Amphibian RLA worked with Resit Ackakaya of the Red List Technical Working Group to devise the appropriate application of the Red List Categories and Criteria for (1) South American tepui-dwelling amphibians for which studies have estimated future rates of habitat loss based on climate modelling; (2) the extinction risk of European salamanders in light of the spread of the non-native invasive fungal pathogen *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorens*. (KSR #6)

Research activities

i. The Amphibian RLA continues to work with Global Wildlife Conservation and the Amphibian Survival Alliance to provide expert input, propose new sites, and propose revisions to existing sites to the AZE database. (KSR #22, 31)

ii. Publications: (1) Choquette, R.E., et al. (2020). 'The internet-based Southeast Asia amphibian pet trade'. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 32(2):68–76.; (2) Carvalho, T.R., et al. (2020). 'Hiding in plain sight: A fourth new cryptic species of the *Adenomera andreae* clade (Anura: Leptodactylidae) from Southwestern Amazonia'. *Herpetologica*

76(3):304–314. <https://doi.org/10.1655/Herpetologica-D-19-00068.1>; (3) Azat, C., et al. (2021). 'A flagship for Austral temperate forest conservation: an action plan for Darwin's frogs brings key stakeholders together'.

Oryx 55(3):356–363. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605319001236>; (4) Carvalho, T.R., et al. (2020). 'New acoustic and molecular data shed light on the poorly known Amazonian frog *Adenomera simonstuarti* (Leptodactylidae): implications for distribution and conservation'. *European Journal of Taxonomy* 682:1–18. <https://doi.org/10.5852/ejt.2020.682> (KSR #32, 43)

Plan

Planning

i. We provided input into two species action plans (*Heleophryne rosei* and *Mantella cowanii*). (KSR #15, 17)

ii. Given the kind and generous support provided by Detroit Zoological Society (DZS) and ASA, we have been able to proceed with the ACAP update and are now in mid to advanced stages in most chapters. However, the pandemic has impacted our timelines, and we foresee ACAP being published in mid to late 2021. (KSR #15, 17)

iii. There were some personnel/logistic difficulties encountered by the Conservation Translocation Specialist Group (CTSG; formerly Reintroduction Specialist Group, who are leading on this target) over the last year. However, the guidelines are now finalised (currently pending an updated logo for CTSG and final instructions from IUCN) and are expected to be produced in 2021. (KSR #18)

iv. In 2019, we received an SSC Internal Grant to test whether the recently developed Conservation Planning Specialist Group 'Assess to Plan' process (CPSG A2P) can help us bridge

the gap between assessment and planning for threatened amphibians and inform multi-species conservation planning for these species. This would be done through participating in a Red Listing workshop to trial the CPSG A2P framework for multi-species amphibian action plans. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, the workshop which was going to act as a basis for this project had to be migrated to an online format, making it difficult to implement this particular project in that new framework. We are planning to request a change of focus, so that the grant can go to support the ACAP update instead. (KSR #15, 17, 18, 20)

v. Together with Amphibian Ark, we supported the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) on various matters associated with the development of the ASA's new Strategic Plan and partnership assessment. (KSR #15, 29)

vi. We reviewed the draft Action Plan for the Table Mountain Ghost Frog (*Heleophryne rosei*). (KSR #15, 29)

vii. We reviewed the draft Cowan's Mantella (*Mantella cowanii*) Action Plan. (KSR #15, 29)

Policy

i. We provided input into CITES Decisions 18.281 to 18.285 regarding the Titicaca Water Frog (*Telmatobius culeus*). (KSR #26)

ii. We coordinated communications around the Titicaca Water Frog reassessment and review of the press release. (KSR #26)

iii. We coordinated the creation of the ASG *Atelopus* Task Force with *Atelopus* Survival Initiative. (KSR #26)

iv. We coordinated input into the SSC Chair's request for selection of Critically Endangered species. (KSR #26)

v. We provided 13 letters of support for threatened amphibian proposals. (KSR #26)

Act

Proposal development and funding

i. By 2020, we had two major granting agencies accepting ACAP as a priority framework. It is generally difficult to track the number of externally funded projects that are supported by funding entities, but we know that there are ten currently active amphibian projects supported by one of these agencies. Please note, however, that these projects were approved in previous years. Given the pandemic, granting agencies also had to adjust to restrictions. (KSR #19, 30)

Technical advice

i. We provided input into IUCN World Conservation Congress motion 86 – Wildlife-friendly linear infrastructure, on behalf of the Species Survival Commission. (KSR #29)

ii. We reviewed various drafts of the agreement between Vestey Pakos Zoo, Bolivian Amphibian Initiative and ASG Bolivia. (KSR #29)

iii. We reviewed a proposal for the Save Our Species Threatened Species Grant. (KSR #29)

iv. We collated ASG input into CITES Decisions 18.281 to 18.285 regarding the Titicaca Water Frog and submitted the resulting ASG document to the CITES Secretariat. (KSR #29)

v. We provided input into a Scientific Authority – Slovakia enquiry. (KSR #29)

Network

Agreements

i. Operations in 2020 were conducted from 2-year grants obtained in 2019 and ongoing staff contracts from the Amphibian RLA host organisation, Global Wildlife Conservation. (KSR #27)

Capacity building

i. The Grant Writing Mentorship Program was launched in May 2019 (<https://www.iucn-amphibians.org/getinvolved-news-blog-new-asg-grant-writing-mentorship-program/>). Since then,

we have matched one ASG mentee to an ASG mentor. (KSR #30)

ii. The Amphibian RLA provided Red List training at one in-person workshop for Sri Lanka and virtual workshops for India, Mainland Southeast Asia, Australia, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, Haiti and the Dominican Republic; remote training was provided for individuals or consultants for Ecuador and Brazil. (KSR #5)

Membership

i. As of 24 March 2021 there are 425 ASG members, inclusive of renewing and new members.

ii. There are 82 new members that joined ASG in 2020.

Proposal development and funding

i. Thanks to a generous financial donation and in-kind support from Detroit Zoological Society (DZS), as well as the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA), it has been possible to support two part-time positions (ASG Programme Officers) for the update of the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan. Thanks to the generous support of the ASA, it was possible to secure a part-time ASG Co-Chair (Ariadne Angulo) for 2020. University of Otago kindly supported ASG Co-Chair Phil Bishop. (KSR #30)

Synergy

i. Key staff from Amphibian Ark and ASA are co-chairs of three ACAP thematic working groups and are proactively updating three ACAP chapters. On the other hand, ASG is providing significant support to ASA Strategic Planning and Partnership processes. (KSR #29)

Communicate

Communication

i. One (1) SSC DATA report was submitted on time. (KSR #28)

ii. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, this year it was not possible to participate in public events. We looked at possibly organising webinars, but we do not have the IT capacities and software subscription that would allow us to do this. (KSR #28)

iii. ASG website is being used and maintained. (KSR #28)

iv. We interacted with Wildlife Trust India, Minister of Environment in the Republic of Korea, and Ministry of Land and Environment Planning in Democratic People's Republic of Korea to promote the use of the IUCN Red List. (KSR #8)

v. An initial communications matrix listing all ASG communication tools was compiled in mid-2019. In consulting with the then Co-Chair of the ASG Communications & Education Working Group, it became clear that we needed to further define our goals and audiences, as it would allow us to distil down the outcomes that we want to see. We were unable to move forward with this priority in 2020 given our lack of in-house communications expertise. In the meantime, we continue to communicate about amphibian conservation through the website and social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook), inclusive of ACAP-related Facebook groups. (KSR #28)

vi. Given changing staffing and resource issues, *FrogLog* was on hold for most of 2020. We did produce an issue that was initially slated to be published at the end of 2020, but by then we had heard of Professor Phil Bishop's diagnosis and decided to hold off publishing *FrogLog* to allow for important news to the community. (KSR #28)

Research activities

i. Thanks to Phil Bishop's efforts, it was possible to secure resources to maintain the Tim Halliday Conservation Library for 2020, which has been



Least Concern *Hyperolius ocellatus*
Photo: Jos Kielgast



Critically Endangered Andean Water Frog,
Telmatobius ventriferum
Photo: Victor Vargas

publishing updated amphibian conservation literature lists (<https://www.iucn-amphibians.org/resources/publications/halliday-conservation-library/>). This was a joint project funded by the ASG, the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) and the University of Otago.

Scientific meetings

- i.** We attended the World Congress of Herpetology (WCH; Dunedin, New Zealand, January 2020 – Phil Bishop, Sally Wren, Amael Borzee and Ruth Marcec-Greaves). (KSR #28)
- ii.** We held an ASG symposium at WCH (Sally Wren, Ruth Marcec-Greaves and Amael Borzee). With meetings and events being cancelled the world over, this target was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. (KSR #28)
- iii.** We participated in an #AmphibianWeek webinar series through a video presentation for the Bolivian Amphibian Initiative (BAI) and ASA, entitled ‘Conservation in times of a pandemic’ (https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=607324193474855&ref=watch_permalink). (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2020

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 5/5

Assess	6	
Plan	12	
Act	6	
Network	7	
Communicate	10	

Main KSRs addressed: 2, 5, 8, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 43

KSR: Key Species Result