The New Jambatu Center for Amphibian Conservation
The Jambatu Center in Quito occupies a privileged position in the world of amphibian conservation. It sits at the gateway to some of the most biologically diverse areas of the planet, houses the largest living collection of endangered tropical amphibian species and operates as an international research facility gathering scientists from around the world.

In 2014, the Center, together with dHUA+GL Architects, has started a new project to encourage the public’s awareness and participation in the center’s activities: The New Jambatu Center for Amphibian Conservation. This is the first project of its kind in Ecuador. It is a push to expand a research center’s function towards a more cultural and pedagogical model—one that may, on top of its scientific mission, promote a greater involvement of the public in the local conservation of frogs.

The design of a new building, in this sense, signals a critical chapter in the life of the center. It represents, on one hand, an important step towards improving the conditions of Jambatu’s labs and ranaria, and on the other, it shows a desire to share the center’s work with the local population—to bring the public into the sciences, to bring science into daily life.
There are four major zones in the proposal: 1) the Public Frog House, 2) the Exhibited Laboratories 3) the Cultural Center and 4) the Immersion Tube. Each of these gathers a set of features that serves both visitors and researchers alike.

A major challenge has been to find ways to link all of these spaces without reducing the privacy and isolation necessary for laboratory procedures. Our design therefore tries to join separate programmatic needs within a single loop or corridor that does not interfere with the function of each program component.

1) The Public Frog House. contains the bioterium (cricket husbandry facilities), and the frog exhibition terraria.

2) The Exhibited Laboratories. Uses the structure of the existing labs, this block reconfigures the research spaces and opens up views from the visitor’s corridor.

3) The Cultural Center contains all the indoor public amenities. This includes an auditorium, a library and a cafe. The lower level is divided into a residential area (for visiting researchers) and additional lab space.

4) The Immersion Tube is located at the end of the circulation loop, and is meant to act as an immersive display, a room-sized terrarium where visitors will experience the frog’s climatic environment.
The construction of the new center will start with the Public Frog House, to be completed in December 2014. The bar will act as a frontispiece or viewing chamber, inviting people to visit the rest of the premises. This includes the design and construction of new exhibition ranariums and bioteriums.

Ideally, the next three elements (the Laboratories, the Cultural Center, and the Frog House) would be built back to back, not simultaneously, ensuring that the uses displaced by the construction of each module be temporarily absorbed by other spaces.

Currently, the Jambatu Center has secured funding for 70% of the first phase of the project and is seeking for sponsorship from people or institutions interested in supporting the link between science and public awareness.

For information on how to support us, please e-mail lolaguarderas@wikiri.com.ec

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For more information about the Center please visit: www.anfibioswebecuador.ec/