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## Jeff Corwin and Panamanian Biologists Find Frog Feared to Be on Edge of Extinction During Filming of Animal Planet Film 'THE VANISHING FROG'

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### - Corwin and Biologists from the Houston Zoo Find Harlequin Frogs, Thought to be the Last of Their Kind, In Dense Rainforest of Panama -

SILVER SPRING, Md., April 30 /PRNewswire/ -- While trekking through a remote rainforest in Omar Torrijos National Park in central Panama for the upcoming Animal Planet documentary THE VANISHING FROG, wildlife biologist Jeff Corwin, along with biologists Bill Konstant and Edgardo Griffith of the Houston Zoo, uncovered a small population of a critically endangered frog species that scientists feared had disappeared from the wild. The frogs belong to the genus *Atelopus*, commonly known as Harlequin frogs. The species in question is *Atelopus varius*, which is one of two species of golden frogs native to Panama, both of which are on the path to extinction in the wild. The specimens in question were found after an exhaustive search of a remote mountain river where the species was formerly found in great numbers just a few years ago. The specimens discovered on April 6, 2008, included a sub-adult which indicates the species still survives in an area where entire populations of amphibians have been wiped out by a deadly fungus.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080430/NEW114> )

THE VANISHING FROG is a joint project of Animal Planet and Clorox, which have joined forces to focus worldwide attention on the deadly fungus which is destroying frogs and other amphibian populations around the world. The film is slated to premiere this fall and sends Corwin on a worldwide mission to uncover clues to the frogs' deadly plight. The crew was filming work of Amphibian Ark, a global alliance dedicated to saving amphibians that cannot be saved in the wild, at the El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center in Panama. The Houston Zoo, along with dozens of other educational institutions, universities, zoos and aquariums in partnership with the AZA, are conducting a last-ditch rescue mission and captive breeding program for Panamanian frogs, toads and salamanders at the Center.

"Some in the scientific community consider this species to be extinct in the wild," a thrilled Corwin beams. "With this rare discovery, it gives us hope that all is not lost in the battle to save this amphibian and others. But it does urgently underscore the importance of this work and emphasizes how fast and nimble we need to be in drawing attention to this global amphibian crisis."

"This discovery of additional animals from this population nearing extinction is very significant," added Dr. Kevin Zippel, program director with Amphibian Ark, a global alliance dedicated to saving amphibians that cannot be saved in the wild. "The golden frogs collected by Jeff and the team will be founders for a captive breeding population. Snatched from the jaws of extinction, these animals and their descendants might someday be used to re-establish golden frogs in Panama, assuming threats in the wild can be mitigated."

The leading cause of amphibian extinction is habitat destruction, but a deadly fungus known as chytrid has led to a dramatic increase in the rate of extinction especially in Panama, Costa Rica and other Central American countries. Additional factors include climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable exploitation of wildlife.

Last fall, Clorox, whose namesake bleach\* is used to kill the fungus in captive breeding facilities and disinfect field equipment in the battle to save frogs, became the first corporate sponsor of the "Year of the Frog" and signed on to THE VANISHING FROG project while it was still in development. In addition, Clorox is providing funding to complete the construction of a visitors and education center at the El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center.

Animal Planet Media (APM), a multi-media business unit of Discovery Communications, is the world's only entertainment brand that immerses viewers in the full range of life in the animal kingdom with rich, deep content via multiple platforms and offers animal lovers and pet owners access to a centralized online, television and mobile community for immersive, engaging, high-quality entertainment, information and enrichment. APM consists of the Animal Planet television network, available in more than 94 million homes in the US; online assets <http://www.animalplanet.com/>, the ultimate online destination for all things animal; the 24/7 broadband channel, Animal Planet Beyond; Petfinder.com, the #1 pet-related Web property globally that facilitates pet adoption; PetsIncredible, a major producer and distributor of pet-training videos and includes web service PetVideo.com; and other media platforms including a robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service; mobile content; and merchandising extensions.

\*Clorox Regular Bleach is an EPA-registered fungicide

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