



# Building the foundations for amphibian *ex situ* conservation in Colombia

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amphibian species  
described in Colombia—  
nearly 10% of the  
world's total!



Program Sponsor:





Colombia harbors at least 811 amphibian species—nearly 10% of the world's total! Yet many of its frogs and salamanders are increasingly threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation, climate change, pollution, and emerging diseases such as chytridiomycosis. In this context, *ex situ* conservation—including conservation breeding and rescue programs—has become an essential complement to the *in situ* conservation efforts in the country.

**To help address this need, Amphibian Ark launched the Colombia Program in 2025, sponsored by Blank Park Zoo.**

**During its first year, the program focused on understanding national capacity, building partnerships, and integrating *ex situ* conservation into broader amphibian planning processes.**



### Assessing national capacity

One of the first priorities of the program was to understand Colombia's existing capacity for amphibian *ex situ* conservation.

Through technical meetings and a national survey with zoos, universities, foundations, and independent researchers, we mapped institutions interested in maintaining amphibians in captivity and assessed their infrastructure, experience, and technical needs.

The assessment showed important expertise already existing in some institutions, particularly within zoos and universities working with highly threatened groups such as harlequin frogs (*Atelopus*) and poison frogs (*Dendrobatidae*). At the same time, there are common challenges, including the need for specialized training, standardized husbandry protocols, improved infrastructure, and sustainable funding.

These findings provide a baseline for guiding AArk's capacity building in Colombia.



### Strengthening interinstitutional collaboration

A dialogue was established with key institutions across Colombia, including zoological organizations such as Cali Zoo, Piscilago, Barranquilla Zoo, and Jaime Duque Park, as well as universities, foundations, and independent researchers.

Discussions have led to the development of a collaborative national model, integrating the work of lead institutions (those with greater experience and infrastructure) and supportive institutions (providing for rearing, population maintenance, education, and outreach activities).



### Integrating *ex situ* conservation into national planning processes

Amphibian Ark, together with the *Atelopus* Survival Initiative, convened a conservation planning workshop to develop the Action Plan for the Conservation of Harlequin Frogs (*Atelopus*) in Colombia. This workshop took place during the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group annual meeting in Cali (Colombia) in October of 2025. The Action Plan prioritizes *ex situ* breeding as one of the key strategic lines within a five-year roadmap aligned with the HarleCAP of the *Atelopus* Survival Initiative.

This process ensured that conservation breeding and rescue programs are integrated into broader national strategies for amphibian conservation.

In parallel, the National Coordinator participated in a series of meetings focused on updating IUCN Red List categories for the genus *Atelopus*, together with members of ASG Colombia. AArk's Conservation Needs Assessments (CNA) were simultaneously conducted for the 41 *Atelopus* species present in Colombia, strengthening the technical inputs for conservation decision-making.



The *Atelopus* planning workshop convened by Amphibian Ark and the *Atelopus* Survival Initiative during the IUCN SSC CPSG Annual Meeting brought together over 30 participants from nearly 20 Colombian institutions.

**30+**

Participants at the *Atelopus* planning workshop

**41**

*Atelopus* species assessed through the AArk CNA process



## Communication & dissemination of Amphibian Ark's work in Colombia

Amphibian Ark's National Coordinator participated in the symposium: Perspectives on Research and Conservation of the Genus *Atelopus* during the Colombian Congress of Herpetology in Santa Marta. The symposium brought together researchers working on the conservation of harlequin frogs.

Preliminary results from the National *Atelopus* Action Plan were presented, highlighting threat assessments, knowledge gaps, and conservation priorities.

Amphibian Ark was positioned as an active partner in national amphibian conservation efforts, encouraging collaboration among academic, institutional, and civil society actors.



*Amphibian Ark's Colombia National Coordinator, Beatriz Velásquez, at the 2025 Colombian Congress of Herpetology in Santa Marta.*

## Looking ahead

Colombia is well positioned to advance amphibian *ex situ* conservation, with existing experience, institutional interest, and ongoing planning processes.

The next phase for the AArk National Program in Colombia will involve developing pilot conservation breeding initiatives, strengthening technical capacity through training, and securing the partnerships and resources needed to ensure long-term success.

*Amphibian Ark's Colombia National Coordinator, Beatriz Velásquez, presenting about the Atelopus Action Plan at the 2025 Colombian Congress of Herpetology*

