



Building the foundations for amphibian *ex situ* conservation in Guatemala



Program Sponsor:



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Guatemala harbors at least 167 species of amphibians, with almost 60% classified as threatened, ranging from vulnerable to critically endangered.

In recent years, significant *in situ* conservation efforts have been made in the country. However, despite having a strong system of protected areas, it is estimated that these efforts alone are insufficient for the protection of amphibians threatened by disease and climate change. This is especially true for species found at high elevations, such as the salamander genera *Pseudoeurycea*, *Nototriton*, and *Bolitoglossa*, which have also been reported as highly threatened genera (Re:wild et al., 2023). However, there is still no *ex situ* breeding program to complement *in situ* efforts in the country.

The results of the [Guatemala Conservation Needs Assessment](#) organized by Amphibian Ark in 2024, identified 22 species needing *ex situ* rescue. **To help address this need, Amphibian Ark launched the Guatemala National Program in 2025, sponsored by Saint Louis Zoo.**

During its first year, the program focused on understanding national capacity, supporting the establishment of the first *ex situ* conservation program for amphibians in Guatemala, and positioning Amphibian Ark as a key conservation partner in the country.



Assessing national capacity

One of the first priorities of the program was to understand Guatemala's existing capacity for amphibian *ex situ* conservation. We first identified 20 institutions with potential interest. Through surveys, direct outreach, and meetings, we assessed each institution's technical capacity, facilities, and willingness to collaborate in amphibian *ex situ* conservation initiatives. This process revealed both strong interest in amphibian conservation and a significant gap in technical capacity for *ex situ* breeding, highlighting the need for targeted training and institutional support.

From this assessment, La Aurora Zoo and Irtra Zoo emerged as the institutions with the strongest capacity to initiate *ex situ* amphibian programs in the short term, while Amphibian Ark will support other interested organizations in developing partnerships and strengthening other capacities to support future initiatives.



Institutional partnerships and program development

La Aurora Zoo was selected as a recipient of one of the Amphibian Ark 2025 grants in order to help fund the establishment of Guatemala's first dedicated amphibian conservation breeding facility. This will enable La Aurora Zoo to manage conservation breeding programs for five threatened endemic species.

Additional institutions—including Fundación Defensores de la Naturaleza, Asociación de Reservas Naturales Privadas, and Irtra Zoo—have also expressed interest in developing future programs and are being supported by Amphibian Ark to do so.

These partnerships are laying the institutional foundation necessary to expand amphibian conservation efforts across Guatemala.





Building national capacity and visibility for amphibian conservation

Recognizing the need for technical expertise, together with La Aurora Zoo, Amphibian Ark organized the first of two training courses to take place in 2026. This initial course was focused on practical husbandry, conservation breeding principles, and collaboration among organizations capable of launching future programs.

In parallel, we increased the visibility of amphibian conservation nationally by presenting the Guatemala program at scientific and conservation events and initiating conversations with national authorities about the need for a national amphibian conservation strategy. Together, these efforts are helping position amphibians as a growing priority within Guatemala's conservation landscape, while equipping institutions with the knowledge and partnerships needed to take action.

Several organizations have expressed interest in developing future initiatives, and we continue supporting them as they navigate internal processes and explore funding opportunities. These early partnerships are helping identify the facilities, expertise, and collaborations needed to successfully launch new conservation programs.

At the same time, the limited visibility of amphibians within national conservation priorities has created an opportunity to engage with CONAP and other stakeholders to advocate for their inclusion in long-term strategies.

In the coming year, we will focus on supporting the implementation of the country's first program of amphibian *ex situ* conservation breeding at La Aurora Zoo, while continuing to mentor other interested institutions. By strengthening partnerships, advancing policy dialogue with CONAP and partners, and identifying new funding opportunities, we are building the conditions needed for sustainable amphibian conservation efforts in the country.

Looking ahead

During the first year, coordinating a diverse network of institutions required sustained communication and relationship-building, which helped establish Amphibian Ark's presence and build momentum around amphibian *ex situ* conservation in Guatemala.

Participants of the Amphibian Husbandry Training course at La Aurora Zoo in Guatemala, January 2026.

