



SAVE THE CAXYS!

By Jimmy Podolny
Editor in Chief

Imagine a world without Caxys! Frogs all around the world are dying at an alarming rate, caused in part by human activities such as driving and showering. Scientists estimate that between one-third and one-half of the world's nearly 6,000 species of amphibians could become extinct in the wild within the next 50 years. Already more than 170 species have likely gone extinct since 1980. Global warming, the deadly chytrid fungus, invasive species, pollution and habitat loss are all responsible for the massive decline in the global frog population.

"The *Spectator* staff does not think anyone at LFA should sit idly by while our mascot withers away into extinction. We owe it to our green brethren to help them out," Editor-in-Chief Nina Zenni said.

That's why *The Spectator* staff has taken the initiative to raise money to help save the Caxys. Throughout this year, the staff will stage numerous events to help save the Caxys. All of the funds raised will go to the Amphibian Ark Project (AArk), a joint-effort group that is dedicated to ensuring the survival of amphibians. The AArk has dedicated 2008 to helping keep frogs alive. Their campaign is titled "2008-The Year of the Frog".

According to the Amphibian Ark Project web site, "The main goal of this campaign [2008-Year of the Frog] is to generate public awareness and understanding of the amphibian extinction crisis which represents the greatest



A frog that is infected with the chytrid fungus

species conservation challenge in the history of humanity. The money raised from this global campaign will help fund initiatives such as training courses, technical guidance, taxon survival efforts, fostering partnerships, capacity building, and communication activities. All these activities will ensure sustainability of the survival assurance populations of amphibians by creating a cash fund for this conservation work that will extend for beyond 2008."

Although habitat loss, and invasive species are key factors in the global decline of frogs, something most LFA

students have never heard of called the chytrid fungus coupled with climate change are the leading causes of frog decline. Amphibian chytrid is a parasitic fungus that has slowly spread from Africa across the planet since the early 1970's. Since the 1930s, African clawed frogs (likely resistant carriers of the fungus) have been shipped around the world by the thousands for human pregnancy tests and lab studies, spreading the disease worldwide.

The AArk reports that the amphibian chytrid was discovered a decade ago and since then dozens of frog species have gone extinct because of it. The virus is untreatable in the wild and is still extremely difficult to treat even in controlled environments. In certain ecosystems, the fungus can kill 80% of the amphibians within months.

Climate change will only make the situation worse. According to scientists, the Earth's rising temperatures enhance cloud cover on tropical mountains, leading to cooler days and warmer nights, both of which favor the chytrid fungus which grows and reproduces best at temperatures between 63 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit.

Frog extinction would have disastrous results. They provide many benefits to humans and are a critical part of a healthy world. They play an important role in the food web as both predator and prey, eating insects which benefits agriculture and minimizes disease spread. Their skin also has substances that protect them from some microbes and viruses, offering promising medical cures for a variety of human diseases.

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Save the Caxys continued

Frogs are an indicator species. They are extremely sensitive to climate change and are therefore a good indicator of the relative health of an ecosystem. The death of frogs foreshadows possible disaster for entire ecosystems. As frogs continue to die, scientists are left wondering what plant or animal group is next.

A new virus that has been killing frogs in Great Britain only increases the threat of extinction. The disease causes frogs' arms and legs to fall off and open sores. It has been linked to over 62,000 deaths. It is believed to have been contracted from imported goldfish and is not directly related to the chytrid virus.

Frogs on every continent are rapidly disappearing. It is up to us to help prevent the caxys from going the way of the dinosaur. LFA will always be linked to frogs, so it is our duty to help out our amphibious brethren.

"Watch for *The Spectator's* efforts throughout the school year and please help us as we try to save the Caxys," Zenni said.

