

Amphibian Conservation Needs Assessment for the Philippines

From July 1st - 4th, the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines, hosted a workshop to assess the conservation needs of all Philippine amphibians. During the workshop, 113 species of amphibians were assessed and prioritized for the conservation actions required to ensure their survival in the wild. It was evident during the assessment process that many of the Red List categories that have been assigned to local species are now quite out of date, with most not being updated since 2004. Although the participants weren't able to complete Red List assessments during the workshop, the Red List categories used to complete this assessment were revised to their estimated values, based upon the expertise of the workshop participants.

According to the estimated Red List categories, Philippine amphibians fall into the following Red List categories: 1 Critically Endangered, 1 Endangered, 21 Vulnerable, 32 Near Threatened, 25 Least Concern and 33 Data Deficient. It is quite clear that Philippine amphibians are in need of a complete Red List re-assessment.

Fifteen participants representing nine different organizations in the Philippines systematically assessed the species using the AArk's Conservation Needs Assessment process (www.amphibianark.org/pdf/AArk-Conservation-Needs-Assessment-tool.pdf), with each species being recommended for one or more of the following conservation actions:

- **Ex Situ Rescue:** 2 species that are in imminent danger of extinction (nationally) and require *ex situ* management, as part of an integrated program, to ensure their survival.
- **In Situ Conservation:** 36 species for which mitigation of threats in the wild may still bring about their successful conservation.
- **In Situ Research:** 47 species that for one or more reasons require further *in situ* research to be carried out as part of the conservation action for the species. One or more critical pieces of information is not known at this time.
- **Ex Situ Research:** 40 species currently undergoing, or proposed for specific applied research that directly contributes to the conservation of the species, or a related species, in the wild (this includes clearly defined 'model' or 'surrogate' species).
- **Mass Production in Captivity:** 1 species threatened through wild collection (e.g. as a food resource), which could be bred in captivity – normally in-country - to replace a demand for wild harvested specimens.
- **Conservation Education:** 42 species that are specifically selected for management – primarily in zoos and aquariums – to inspire and increase knowledge in visitors, in order to promote positive behavioral change.
- **Biobanking:** 2 species for which the long-term storage of sperm or cells to perpetuate their genetic variation is urgently recommended, due the serious threat of extinction of the species.
- **No Conservation Action Required:** 19 species that do not require any conservation action at this point in time.

The complete results from the workshop are available on Amphibian Ark's web site, www.amphibianark.org/assessmentresults.htm.

During the last day of the workshop, participants drafted the outline for a National Amphibian Action Plan for the Philippines, and allocated authors for each section of the document. This will be a detailed national action plan, and will include the priorities and recommendations produced during the workshop. It is anticipated that the action plan will be published before the end of 2014.



Participants of the Amphibian Conservation Needs Assessment for the Philippines.
Photo: Kevin Johnson.

a more coordinated response, and conservation programs which have a better chance of achieving their aims. AArk staff will continue to provide support and advice as required, to ensure the best possible outcomes for the long-term survival of amphibians in the wild in the Philippines (see article on page 13).

Participants also managed a quick visit to Avilon Zoo, the largest zoological institution in the Philippines in terms of land area and collection of animals. Zoo staff are hoping to convert some existing facilities into a new amphibian conservation breeding area over the coming months.

Funding for the workshop was generously provided by Chester Zoo and the University of Santo Tomas, with the University of Santo Tomas providing the workshop venue and equipment.

As with other recent amphibian conservation needs assessment workshops, AArk staff are working with the local amphibian conservation community to identify a suitable person to appoint to a half-time National Amphibian Conservation Coordinator position for a period of twelve months. This person will work with participants from the assessment and other stakeholders to complete the writing and publishing of the National Amphibian Action Plan and will then help to develop further species-level conservation action plans and to help forge new partnerships, both in-country and internationally, to ensure that recommendations from the workshop are implemented in a coordinated way. Funding is being sought to employ a suitable candidate. Experience has shown that having a person dedicated to this type of role for a period after the assessment workshop will lead to