

Costa Rican Amphibians Conservation Needs Assessment Workshop

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With limited conservation resources and thousands of threatened species in need of help, the Conservation Needs Assessment (CNA, www.conservationneeds.org) process, managed by the AArk, seeks to objectively and consistently identify priority species and their immediate conservation needs.

Through a transparent, logical and objective method, the CNA process uses current knowledge of species in the wild to determine those with the most pressing conservation needs and provides a foundation for the development of holistic conservation action plans that combine *in situ* and *ex situ* actions, as appropriate. Conservation Needs Assessments generate national prioritized lists of species recommended for one or more conservation action, and these can subsequently be used to assist in the development of species recovery plans and national action plans, or to better inform national conservation priorities, identifying priority taxa for both *in situ* or *ex situ* conservation work. Templates for both national action plans and species recovery plans are available on the AArk website at www.amphibianark.org/husbandry-documents/.

Assessors from a wide variety of backgrounds are identified, and may include ASG members, academics, field biologists and researchers, university students, amphibian husbandry experts, and members of national, local, or regional wildlife agencies.

The assessments

The primary aim of a workshop which was held at Simón Bolívar Zoo and Botanical Garden, San José, Costa Rica, in January 2020, was to update and in some cases conduct first-time assessments for approximately 184 species which occur in Costa Rica. The joint Amphibian Red List workshop and CNA workshop included thirty experts, representing universities, NGO's, zoos and museums, both within Costa Rica and from overseas, contributed to the assessments, along with facilitators from the IUCN Amphibian Red List Authority and the Amphibian Ark.

During the workshop, a large amount of unpublished data were readily shared and recorded within the assessments, showing one of the values of the process. In addition to updating the Amphibian

Red List and compiling the CNAs, bringing experts together is an excellent opportunity for networking, and furthering collaboration between those present.

Information provided by the experts resulted in conservation actions being recommended for over 180 Costa Rican species, which include:

- 54 species recommended for *in situ* conservation
- 170 for further *in situ* research
- 12 species recommended for *ex situ* rescue programs
- 4 species which can be used for *ex situ* research to develop husbandry and breeding protocols for more threatened species
- 1 species recommended mass reproduction in captivity
- 7 species which are suitable for conservation education purposes
- 12 species for which genetic material should be collected for biobanking
- 24 species for which no conservation action is needed at this time.

This was the fourth joint RLA / CNA which has been held – these joint assessment workshops not only result in the development of two different types of assessments, but offer considerable cost savings over holding two separate workshops. In addition they avoid the need for experts to spend time coming together on separate occasions for separate workshops. They are yet another example of how working collaboratively for conservation is far more efficient than working alone. Additional joint workshops are planned for the future, wherever the national priorities of the Red List Authority and the Conservation Needs Assessments overlap.

The CNAs for Costa Rica, along with the resulting recommendations for conservation action can be seen at the CNA web site at www.conservationneeds.org.



Thirty experts, representing universities, NGO's, zoos and museums, both within Costa Rica and from overseas, contributed to the Conservation Needs and Red List assessments, at Simón Bolívar Zoo and Botanical Garden, Costa Rica, in January 2020. Photo: Luis Carrillo.