Conservation Needs Assessments for Malaysian amphibians

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Malaysia is home to 265 species of amphibians, with 144 of these being endemic to the country, 46 species previously listed as threatened (three Critically Endangered, ten Endangered and thirty-three Vulnerable), thirty species listed as Data Deficient and sixty-one species not previously assessed for the Red List. In 2012, 169 Malaysian amphibian species were assessed for their conservation needs, however these assessments were made using an early version of the assessment process, which was not as reliable as the current version, and were in need of re-assessment.

In January this year, seven Malaysian amphibian experts met with Programme Officers from the IUCN Amphibian Red List Authority and Amphibian Ark, to undertake Red List Assessments and Conservation Needs Assessments for these species. This joint assessment workshop was a great opportunity for both organizations to see each other's processes, as well as the outcomes from each set of assessments, and to make the best use of resources, and of course, the participants' time. Red List assessments (www.iucnredlist.org) determine the relative risk of extinction, highlighting those species that are facing a high risk of extinction, while the Conservation Needs Assessments (www.conservationneeds.org) produce prioritized recommendations for a range of conservation actions, which will hopefully help to prevent further extinctions.

The workshop was hosted by the School of Biological Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, in Penang, and was funded by Rainforest Trust and Amphibian Ark. We worked in two groups, split geographically, with one group focussing on species from Peninsular Malaysia, and the other group working on species from Malaysian Borneo. The focal species were those which had either not previously been Red Listed, species whose Red List assessments were quite out of date, or those where significant changes had occurred in the wild populations since the last Red List Assessment was made.

This joint approach to assessments was very successful, and the participants were happy to see recommendations being made for future conservation actions. Some of the assessments require additional input from experts who were not present during the workshop, and this will hopefully be completed within the next couple of months. The Red List Assessments will be reviewed within the next few months, with the final Red List category being determined, and the assessment information being published online. The Conservation Needs Assessments will also be reviewed, and once approved, will also be available online.

Collectively, we managed to complete 126 Conservation Needs Assessments, with another fourty-one assessments which require some additional input from other experts currently being reviewed and updated. Since the meeting, we have reviewed all the assessments, corrected any grammatical issues and spelling mistakes. The 126 completed assessments are now available on the Conservation Needs Assessment web site (www.ConservationNeeds.org), and the assessment data is also be available in all reports on the site.

Of the 126 assessments completed so far, four threatened species were recommended for urgent *ex situ* rescue (*Leptolalax kecil*, *Ingerophrynus kumquat*, *Ansonia smeagol* and *Abavorana nazgul*). Three of these species have never been held in captivity before and more common, but related analog species have been recommended that can potentially be used to develop husbandry and breeding protocols prior to the threatened species being brought into captivity. AArk staff will work with our colleagues in Malaysia to investigate potential captive programs for these species, however additional field work is required to determine the suitability of establishing rescue programs for these species.

We hope that the Amphibian Red List Authority and AArk staff have the opportunity to follow this joint approach to assessments again in the future, and both groups are currently reviewing their priority countries and regions to determine potential overlap with future assessments.

A group of experts in the field of Malaysian amphibians gathered in Penang in January to carry out Red List and Conservation Needs Assessments for Malaysian amphibians.