



KEY MESSAGES

- **THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE:** Humans should have connections to nature. Experiences in nature literally enrich our lives and inform our choices for future generations.
 - Nature renews the spirit, refreshes emotional and mental health, and provides places to live, play, recreate, explore, learn, and enjoy.
 - Nature's beauty and resources are national and international treasures, defining our character and heritage.
 - The variety and diversity of life on Earth is needed and inspirational for human existence.
- **MAN'S EFFECT ON NATURE:** All life on earth exists with interdependent relationships between living things and their environments. A healthy environment sustains life for humans and animals.
 - Humans are responsible for dramatic changes to nature at a rate unprecedented in Earth's history, due to population growth, increased consumption of resources, global warming, habitat destruction, invasive species, and overuse of many species.
 - People should recognize their responsibility to care for the Earth and leave a healthy environment for our families and future generations. Due to the unprecedented changes occurring on the planet, we must often intervene to save wildlife.
- **FROGS MATTER:** Amphibians are a critical part of a healthy natural world. In addition to their intrinsic value as a beautiful part of nature, they offer many benefits to us:
 - They play an important role in the food web as both predator and prey, maintaining the delicate balance of nature. Where they are disappearing, detrimental effects are already being documented.
 - Amphibians eat pest insects, benefiting successful agriculture around the world and minimizing the spread of diseases, including malaria.
 - The skin of amphibians has substances that protect them from some microbes and viruses, offering possible medical cures for a variety of human diseases, including AIDS.

- Biologists refer to amphibians as “the canary in the coal mine”: they are among the first species to be affected by environmental stressors, so when they show declines in the wild, it serves as a warning to other species, including humans.
 - Amphibians’ skin is highly permeable, allowing them to drink and breathe. Unfortunately, contaminants also readily enter the body, making amphibians an exceptional indicator of environmental quality. They are particularly sensitive to pollution, making them important sentinels to potential human threats.
 - Frogs have had a special place in various human cultures for centuries, cherished as agents of life and good luck.
- **THE PROBLEM:** After thriving for over 360 million years, 1/3 to 1/2 of the world’s approximately 6,000 known amphibian species could go extinct in our lifetime.
 - Earth is facing the single largest mass extinction since the disappearance of dinosaurs.
- **THE REASON:** Amphibians are severely affected by habitat loss, climate change, pollution and pesticides, introduced species, and over-collection for food and pets. While habitat destruction is the major threat, the most immediate cause is a parasitic fungus called amphibian chytrid, a disease that is deadly to hundreds of amphibian species and has quickly spread from Africa across the planet over the past 30-40 years. Global climate change may have exacerbated the problem.
 - The amphibian chytrid was discovered a decade ago and since then dozens of frog species have gone extinct because of it.
 - 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. Recently, the food and pet trade may have contributed to the problem as well.
 - Amphibian chytrid is currently unstoppable and untreatable in the wild, even in protected areas. In the environments where it thrives, the fungus can kill 80 percent of the native amphibians within months, leading to widespread amphibian extinctions.
 - The amphibian chytrid’s spread and effects may be exacerbated by climate change.
 - Warmer temperatures dry the moist areas where amphibians thrive, and cause stress that may lead to greater susceptibility to disease.
- **THE SOLUTION:** In response to the problem, scientists and conservationists agreed to an Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP), including research, assessment, and conservation in nature. For those species that cannot be saved in nature, the plan is to rescue them before they are gone, and to protect them in captive facilities until the

threats to the wild populations can be controlled. Captive management is a vital component of ACAP's integrated conservation effort, buying valuable time to mitigate threats for species that would otherwise go extinct. The Amphibian Ark is an initiative to fulfill our responsibility for this critical component of the ACAP. The AArk plan is simple but requires at least \$50 million in funding.

- Amphibian Ark is a program coordinated by the World Conservation Union (IUCN)/Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, IUCN/SSC Amphibian Specialist Group, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), and supported by a worldwide network of zoos and aquariums, to help keep threatened amphibian species afloat.
 - The AArk program will rescue priority endangered species and place them in "protective custody" in dedicated biosecure facilities at zoos, aquariums, and other institutions around the world for safekeeping and breeding, helping to ensure the long-term survival of amphibians.
 - These rescued amphibians will be released back into the wild when the original threats have been controlled.
- **GETTING THE WORD OUT:** Organizations that support Amphibian Ark will lead a global public awareness campaign, "2008: The Year of the Frog" to:
 - Raise awareness among national governments, world media, school educators, and people generally about the vulnerability of amphibians and the extinction crisis they face.
 - Raise funds through corporate sponsorship, philanthropy, public, and government involvement to support AArk's rescue efforts and ensure amphibians' long-term sustainability
 - Funds will be paid to AArk through the Global Conservation Network, a part of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. Funds will cover costs such as:
 - ❖ Prioritization workshops
 - ❖ Biosecure rescue centers and operating expenses
 - ❖ Staffing and training
 - ❖ Field surveys and rescues
 - Inspire the zoo community and other institutions to participate in AArk by creating and maintaining facilities for the most threatened amphibians.
 - Further establish IUCN and the world zoo and aquarium community as leaders in global conservation.

- **A FURTHER PURPOSE:** The Year of the Frog will serve as an example of how to boldly and confidently face one of our planet's biggest environmental challenges.
 - The condition of our planet and its vanishing wildlife is a top concern of both adults and children, who are frustrated and unsure of how to help. This campaign and the AArk program will give them a direct chance to help.
 - People will be invited to participate in the AArk initiative by getting engaged as volunteers where needed, spreading the word, making donations, and influencing governments, and they will learn that, working together, we can deal with environmental crises.
 - The Amphibian Ark and Year of the Frog will help all to confidently face and address other environmental challenges.