



Workshop

A Conservation Strategy for the Amphibians of Madagascar

Foreword

Madagascar is well known for its very high number of amphibian species (more than 220), and their endemism (more than 99% are exclusive). However, the habitat degradation and deforestation pose serious conservation problems regarding frogs and their survivorship.

In the last fifteen years many researches and surveys have been carried out in rainforests, dry forests and other environments, allowing to yield a large amount of distributional, ecological, and taxonomical information. It is now evident that to achieve a more durable conservation effect it is necessary to develop a new scientific alliance that fosters a multi-focused program for the forthcoming years.

We firmly believe that Madagascar holds the potential to become a worldwide model region for a concerted and collaborative effort of researchers, institutions and NGOs to set up a system of efficient protection, study and long-term monitoring of amphibians.

As a first step to coordinate and plan such an effort, we here invite you to join us in the realisation of a workshop, during which researchers and conservationists interested in Madagascan amphibians will meet and start outlining a sustainable long-term conservation strategy for these unique animals.

Aims of the workshop

The workshop will be the ideal occasion and meeting point to present and discuss the main topics of the ongoing projects on the amphibians of Madagascar. By bringing together people actively interested in conservation strategies for Malagasy amphibians we will reach two aims: (1) achieving consensus on the main initiatives, (2) understand how to prioritise the initiatives.

It is our intention to achieve, as a final result, a closer collaboration of the most prominent herpetologists working on Malagasy amphibians, and the clear-cut definition of a long-term conservation program. For this, there will be a series of talks that will show the most important aspects of conservation and elaborate proposals of how to reach a final consensus.

The meeting is not properly a scientific congress, but it is a workshop, i.e. a roundtable where people will be invited to speak and present the main concerns regarding the conservation of the amphibians of Madagascar. Notwithstanding, we encourage the participation of scientists and divulgators involved in Madagascar conservation and in particular interested to the frogs of the Grand'Ile.

Invited speakers (notably some of the most renewed scientists and researchers) will treat and lead one of the treated themes, catalysing the interest of the participants.

Treated themes

In detail, the main topics that could be discussed (a list to be intended as preliminary and susceptible of further changes) are as follows (rationale and detailed information provided in the following sections of this circular):

1 Coordination of activities

A discussion of how to establish a local coordination and provide conservation agencies in Madagascar.

2 Training of local people and increase of public awareness

A presentation of the important training activity of student field researchers, by conducting workshops on amphibian (and reptile) identification and curation. Furthermore we will stress the importance of increasing the public awareness regarding the amphibian conservation.

3 Inventories and ecological studies

An update about the survey activity and the need to conduct inventories in a series of localities (short term and long term surveys). Integrate this new locality data with data already available for building predictive mapping of species distribution ranges, which will be used in conservation planning and monitoring.

4 Molecular identification and conservation genetics

The application of a molecular identification by DNA barcoding methods would allow the large-scale

verification of amphibian inventory results.

5 Identification and integration of new protected areas and new forms of habitat protection

The application of distributional data to identify hot spots for the amphibian diversity and to create new protected areas specifically conceived for the amphibian conservation.

6 Developing a national herpetological collection

The creation and officialisation of a national herpetological collection is a needed aspect to warrant the realisation of taxonomic and systematic works.

7 Collecting and captive breeding. Trade, CITES, and exporting quotas

Several species of amphibians are collected for the pet-trade. Is there a need for a captive breeding program in situ and ex situ? Assist in regulating the pet-trade, assess the potential of captive breeding, and define priority species for possible captive breeding actions.

8 Emerging pathologies

Emerging amphibian pathologies are known all around the World, and in many cases are the reason of formerly unexplained declines. Which is the situation for Madagascar?

Structure of the workshop

Each of the major themes will be introduced by invited experts, during four days of workshop. Ideally, one talk will be in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. After the talk there will be a discussion on the subjects raised. During the last days there will be the chance to put down a final resolution.

Location

The location for the Workshop is the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo. This choice is first of all justified by the facility to reach Antananarivo via international air flight. There is a good network of hotels and restaurants, and nowadays there is a good cellular telephonic covering, that allows remaining in contact with the rest of the world. This is also made possible with the several internet points.

We have not yet identified the exact place where the workshop will be held, but it is likely that it will be at one of the most relevant hotels of the town

The dates

17 September (Sunday) – Welcome to the participants

18-21 September – The workshop

22-23 September – Post-workshop herpetological trip

This period is good especially taking into account the climatic conditions in Madagascar. This is the austral winter, which warrants relatively cold temperatures and – in general – absence of big rains. For this reason the participants will benefit of a weather that will also warrant a quite easy access to possible protected areas.

The last two days will be likely dedicated to a herpetological excursion to one of the closest rainforest sites of Madagascar, e.g. Andasibe. Even if the season is not the ideal for amphibians and reptiles, there will be the need to observe some of the most peculiar amphibian species of mid-altitude rainforests.

Participation

The Workshop is open to all the persons interested in amphibian conservation. There is no subscription fee. Anyhow, since we need to have an idea of the participation we need to get a filled subscription form, also specifying whether the participant would like to present a talk during the workshop. Please note that we cannot guarantee at this stage to allocate time to all interested participants for a standard oral contribution of 15-30 minutes. Since it is paramount to have enough time for interactive discussion, we may be able to allocate short time slots only to each to each participant, in order to allow for a short presentation of her or his main activities.

Please, fill the enclosed subscription sheet and send an abstract of the communication or poster. The maximum length of the abstract is one page A4, in interline 1. The title must be written in font Times New Roman 16, all in capital and bold, and centered. After that one lines is dedicated the author(s) of the talk

(centered, font 14), and then the institution and address (in italic, font 12). One line divides this part from the rest of the text, written in font Times New Roman 12, and justified.

Example of an abstract

UNPRECEDENTED AMPHIBIAN DIVERSITY IN ANDASIBE

George Albert Boulenger

** The British Museum of Natural History (Natural History Section), London, England*

The amphibians of Andasibe in central-eastern Madagascar have been monitored and surveyed for a study period of three years. A total of 110 species were found, most of which formerly unknown. Three new species have already been identified and described.

Contacts

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Subscription (to be sent to the organisers)

**Participation to the first workshop on the Amphibian Conservation of Madagascar
Antananarivo 17-23 September 2006**



NAME.....

FIRST NAME.....

INSTITUTION.....

EMAIL ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE/FAX.....

POSTAL ADDRESS.....

DO YOU INTEND TO PRESENT A TALK?.....

TITLE.....

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A POST WORKSHOP HERPETOLOGICAL TRIP?.....

NOTE: The filled subscription must be sent (preferably via email or via fax) before the 10th of June (email address: f.andreone@libero.it)