



To: All conservation network members of ZOO and WILD
From: ZOO, WILD & ANSA, Amphibian Network of South Asia
Ref: Amphibian Crisis – signature campaign
Date:

Dear Colleagues:

As a conservationist, you are probably aware of the global amphibian crisis. Almost all of the Earth's amphibians are in decline as a result of habitat destruction & fragmentation, over-collection, increased UV radiation, pollution & pesticides, alien species, climate change, and disease. It is estimated that as many as a third to half of all amphibians could vanish within our lifetime!

The world's conservation community has become particularly alarmed because of massive die-offs and extinctions in some countries, due to a fungus called "Chytrid" (pronounced kai – trid). The global zoo/captive community has organised its own programme of action led by the **Conservation Breeding Specialist Group CBSG SSC IUCN** and the **World Association of Zoos and Aquariums WAZA**. This programme is called **AArk, Amphibian Ark**. **ZOO** and **WILD**, active partners of **CBSG** and **WAZA**, and host of the **Amphibian Network of South Asia ANSA** and **South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation SAZARC**, have hopped aboard the **AArk** with a series of actions appropriate to India and other South Asian countries.

In the case of India, for example, there are 240 amphibian species of which 155 occur in India only ... nowhere else. India is responsible for these species ... if they become extinct they are lost to the world. One is already extinct, 14 are Critically Endangered, 30 are Endangered and 19 are Vulnerable. Total 64 species ... one extinct and 63 threatened with extinction.

The deadly chytrid fungus has not been noted in India so far, but it may be that it is due to insufficient research. Training and equipment are being organised to conduct tests for chytrid in India and other South Asian countries. A training course has been scheduled for December in Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady, Kerala, India.

Our major priority is to create awareness of the very existence of amphibians and their role in ecosystem health as well as the many threats to their continued survival. The first target audience would be government authorities, as amphibians so far have been a low priority in official conservation action.

This year for Indian Wildlife Week, a 53 year old activity of government that is the most extensive conservation awareness event of the year, we are offering an education kit about the amphibian crisis as part of our programme. Organisations and institutions which order our materials are being asked to include a signature campaign along with their programme, taking the signature of all participants and their collaborators. Our other conservation network members are also invited to assist with the signature campaign. You may also order educational materials.

This campaign is directly associated with the global signature campaign of **AArk**, which has declared 2008 as the "Year of Frog" to raise awareness of amphibian extinction crisis worldwide to call on all governments to preserve amphibian life. Our aim is for it to be the largest petition ever signed on behalf of endangered animals. The petition calls on governments to "commit resources for urgent global action to rescue frogs and other amphibians."

Wildlife Week is an excellent time to collect signatures on the petition. We call on all our education partners ordering materials from us to collect signatures from participants and on all our network members to assist in this campaign. A copy of the petition is enclosed in snail mail and attached in email. Please xerox the form in your place or write to us requesting copies. Collect signatures with complete information and post to our office. We will send them to AArk to join with those of the global campaign. We call on all network members also to consider conducting an education programme and/or signature campaign.

Thanks for being part of saving amphibians.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Walker and Sanjay Molur

