

National Amphibian Conservation Coordinator for the Philippines

Amphibian Ark staff helps to prioritize amphibian species in need of *ex situ* conservation, build capacity where it is most needed, and coordinate *captive amphibian conservation* programs implemented by partners around the world, with the first emphasis on programs within the range countries of the species. We are always aware of our obligation to couple *captive* conservation measures with the necessary efforts to protect or restore species in their natural habitats.

Our Taxon Officers help to coordinate all aspects of implementation within the AArk initiative and assist AArk partners in identifying priority taxa for conservation work both in captivity and in the wild. An initial part of this process involves evaluating species, to help conservation managers maximize the impact of their limited conservation resources by identifying which amphibian species are most in need of particular types of conservation action. These Conservation Needs Assessments (www.amphibianark.org/pdf/AArk-Conservation-Needs-Assessment-tool.pdf / www.amphibianark.org/pdf/Proceso-AArk-de-planificacion-para-la-conservacion-de-anfibios.pdf) are carried out with national Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) members, under the guidance of an experienced AArk assessment facilitator, with the goal of updating information and separating out and assessing all species, to determine the best conservation actions to help ensure their ultimate survival in the wild. The assessment results in a series of reports for nine different conservation actions. Species are listed according to their priority for the particular conservation action, and the supporting documentation provides a guide for those species which have the most chance of benefiting from the prescribed conservation action(s).

Since 2007, we have facilitated assessment of the conservation needs of 3,375 (46%) of the world's amphibian species through 26 national or regional workshops. Additional workshops are planned for other countries and regions over the coming months. The results of previous assessment workshops are available on the Assessment Results page of our web site, www.amphibianark.org/resources/assessment-results/, and to date, 412 different species have been assessed as requiring urgent captive rescue to help prevent their extinction.

The benefits of this assessment process are clear – we assemble the leading amphibian field experts in each region, to collectively determine the best course of conservation actions to help prevent the extinctions of threatened amphibian species in the wild. These actions include habitat restoration and preservation, threat mitigation, captive breeding for release and community awareness and involvement.

After the many thousands of dollars and thousands of hours of experts' time it has taken to hold these assessment workshops, many of the recommendations resulting from the workshops for both captive and field conservation actions are yet to be implemented. One of the biggest obstacles for this is a lack of funding. As most conservationists are aware, sufficient funding to effectively carry out conservation actions has always been difficult to obtain, and increasingly, the decreasing amounts of available funds are being sought for an increasing number of projects. However, it appears that in many cases, the lack of a coordinated, national approach, and lack of support for developing and implementing conservation actions for amphibians is often the reason why insufficient action occurs.

National Amphibian Conservation Coordinators

A possible solution to this is one that AArk staff have been promoting for some time now - the appointment of part-time, National Amphibian Conservation Coordinators. AArk staff will work with the local amphibian conservation community in each country to identify a suitable person to appoint to a half-time position for a period of 12 months. This person will report directly to the national Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) Chair(s) and will work with workshop participants and other local stakeholders to help develop or update national amphibian conservation action



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plans and to help forge new partnerships, both in-country and internationally, to ensure that recommendations from the assessments are implemented in a coordinated way. Experience has shown that having a person dedicated to this type of role for a period after the assessment workshop will lead to a more coordinated response, and conservation programs which have a better chance of achieving their aims.

AArk staff will work with these coordinators to provide any additional support that might be required to ensure that priority conservation actions can be undertaken. Funding to cover this position in a half-time role for a 12-month period has been included in the budgets for the past 5-6 assessment workshops, but unfortunately, funding to support these positions has not yet been found.

Some of the duties associated with the role include:

1. Identifying relevant range-country individuals and organizations active or interested in both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of amphibians.
2. Working with the local ASG Chair and members to coordinate and complete the development of a National Amphibian Action Plan.
3. Disseminate National Action Plan to all relevant stakeholders.
4. Generating and maintaining a database which includes national amphibian lists; significant local areas in terms of diversity, endemism, and conservation of amphibians; a national amphibian conservation partnership database
5. Maintaining and updating the Amphibian Conservation Needs Assessment data as needed.
6. Facilitate and ensuring open and regular lines of communication between national amphibian conservation individuals and organizations.
7. Promoting the establishment and development of Taxon Management Plans for priority species.
8. Identifying the need for capacity building within the country including population management, husbandry and veterinary expertise and other aspects.
9. Promoting the conservation of amphibians and the development/update of national amphibian Red List assessments.

The salary and working entitlements would be based on local employment levels.

Help support conservation efforts in the Philippines

During the Conservation Needs Assessment workshop held in the Philippines in July, the local ASG members discussed the appointment of a National Amphibian Coordinator, and they are very keen to identify and employ a suitable candidate, as soon as funding allows. On the last day of the workshop, participants began drafting the first National Amphibian Action Plan for the Philippines, authors for each of the chapters were identified, and the authors have been working on their various components of the document. Plans are underway to bring the group back together again before the end of the year, to work on assembling the chapters, and identifying the next steps towards implementing a range of national conservation actions. AArk staff are working with the Philippines ASG members to locate funding to support this part-time position - this will be the first position of its type, and we are really excited about the prospects of the coordinator helping to maintain the enthusiasm generated during the assessment workshop.

We are hoping to raise US\$ 4,500 to support this part-time position in Manila, for a 12-month period. If you or your organization has an interest in amphibian conservation programs in the Philippines, and would like to support the coordination of national conservation actions, please contact AArk staff, kevinj@amphibianark.org.

We very much hope that other countries will also consider appointing a part-time National Amphibian Conservation Coordinator, to help support ongoing conservation efforts and we are keen to promote this initiative. Having a single, national point of contact, whose job is to coordinate and support new conservation programs will be a great asset for the further development of amphibian conservation programs, and for uniting national efforts.