



MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ZOO ATLANTA WORKS ON GLOBAL AMPHIBIAN ISSUE

Zoo Atlanta's Curator of Herpetology Joins Scientists from Around the Globe

WHO: Zoo Atlanta's Curator of Herpetology, Joseph R. Mendelson III, Ph.D, joined scientists from around the world at San Diego Zoo's reptile house recently to create a comprehensive manual for how to control combating diseases in amphibians (amphibians consist of frogs, salamanders and the little known caecilians).

The amphibian populations have steadily been declining dramatically because of chytrid, an amphibian fungal disease that infects the skin of amphibians; a vital organ through which many drink and breathe. It was discovered a decade ago; dozens of frog species have already vanished because of it. In environments where it thrives, the fungus can kill 80 percent of the native amphibians within months. Currently, it is unstoppable and untreatable in the wild, even in 'protected' areas. "Chytrid fungus is doing things that diseases don't normally do; namely, it's driving species directly to extinction. That doesn't happen in a normal, healthy world," said Joseph Mendelson.

The San Diego Zoo and Zoo Atlanta invited amphibian specialists from the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, to work toward a consensus on the best practices to prevent and control amphibian diseases. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, the largest governmental cultural agency in the United States, provided the funds for the three-day workshop. "We hope the work we do with our colleagues will allow us to understand this disease and help save the amphibian species in the wild," said Dennis Kelly, President and CEO, Zoo Atlanta.

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FOOTAGE: Footage of frogs at the San Diego Zoo being screened for infectious disease by Allen Pessier, Anne-Imelda Radice, and Joseph Mendelson.
Interview with Joseph R. Mendelson III, Ph.D, Curator of Herpetology, Zoo Atlanta

Interview with Allan Pessier, Ph.D, Scientist, San Diego Zoo Conservation
Research

Interview with Anne-Imelda Radice, Ph.D, Director, Institute of Museum and
Library

ABOUT:

About Zoo Atlanta

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and outdoor family fun. From well-known native wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with more than 1,000 animals from around the world. Zoo Atlanta is the proud home of Xi Lan, the only giant panda cub born in the U.S. in 2008, and the future home of the Southeast's largest parakeet aviary, an immersive experience opening in April 2009. Other highlights include one of the nation's most recognized collections of great apes and a global center of excellence for the care and reproduction of vanishing amphibians and reptiles. Zoo Atlanta is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or go to zooatlanta.org.

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