



UNIVERSITY OF DELHI
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PRESS RELEASE - **EMBARGOED** UNTIL 00:01 GMT FEB.17

REDISCOVERY OF 5 LOST! FROGS FROM INDIA

Lost! Amphibians of India is an ambitious campaign that aims to discover 50 species of Indian amphibians that are lost to the world. A species is 'lost' when it has not been located for a substantial period of time since its original description and is considered to be actually or potentially extinct in the wild.

New Delhi (February 17th, 2011) –**Lost! Amphibians of India** is an initiative launched at the University of Delhi on 2 November 2010 <website <http://www.lostspeciesindia.org/LAI2/>

This campaign is spearheaded by **University of Delhi** and works in collaboration with IUCN/ASG, Conservation International, Global Wildlife Conservation, DST and DBT, Government of India, NHM, London and AVC Assam. Prof SD Biju of University of Delhi is the coordinator of the initiative.

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India has remarkable amphibian diversity. 321 amphibian species are described from India. However, India has already lost 13% of its amphibians. Sadly, this has placed India as the country with the maximum number of lost species in the world. All that is known of these species are only very brief century-old original descriptions and/or sketchy illustrations. The lost amphibians species are as recent as 18 years or as far back as 170 years.

DISCOVERY of 5 LOST! Frogs: The good news is that just three months after launch of the campaign, LAI has made remarkable rediscoveries of five lost species of frogs. Images can be downloaded from here <http://bit.ly/eLoKGF> (*****PLEASE PROVIDE IMAGE CREDITS*****). Photo can only be used or distributed in conjunction with the content of University of Delhi/CI's press release.



- **Chalazodes Bubble-nest Frog** (*Raorchestes chalazodes*) Last seen in 1874! Rediscovered after 136 years. This striking fluorescent green frog with ash-blue thighs and black pupils with golden patches (highly unusual traits among amphibians) frog leads a secretive life, presumably inside reeds during the day. It is thought that the species does not have a free-swimming tadpole stage, but completes development inside the egg. Rediscovered from **Kodayar, Tamil Nadu** by

Ganesan R (ATREE, Bangalore), **Seshadri KS** (ATREE, Bangalore) and **SD Biju** (University of Delhi). Listed by the IUCN as Critically Endangered.

- **Anamalai Dot-frog** (*Ramanella anamalaiensis*) Rediscovered after 73 years. This narrow-mouthed frog is named after the Anamalai Hills in the southern Western Ghats where it was discovered (and last seen) in 1937 and the presence of yellow spots on its upper side and scattered white spots on its underside. The original specimen was lost and there was no confirmed information on the species until its rediscovery from **Parambikulam, Kerala** by **SP Vijayakumar** (IISc, Bangalore), **Anil Zachariah** (Veterinary-doctor cum-naturalist), **David Raju** (naturalist from Kerala), **Sachin Rai** (Bombay based naturalist and wildlife photographer) and **SD Biju** (University of Delhi). The frog calls loudly from marshy areas during the monsoon season but hides the rest of the year under stones and logs on the forest floor or in tree holes. Listed by the IUCN as Data Deficient.
- **Dehradun Stream Frog** (*Amolops chakrataensis*) – only known from the original description based on a single specimen in 1985. Rediscovered after 25 years by a team of graduate students from Delhi University: **Sonali G, Gargi S** and **Pratyush** with **Robin Suyesh, Rachunliu G Kamei** and **SD Biju** (University of Delhi). The frog is characterized by a light green dorsal color with tiny dark spots. The frog appears to be rare and its habitat (**Tiger Falls, Chakrata, Dehradun, Uttarakhand**) requires protection to ensure its survival. Listed by the IUCN as Data Deficient.
- **Silent Valley Tropical Frog** (*Micrixalus thampii*) Last seen 30 years ago and rediscovered in rubbish bin in a field station in **Silent Valley National Park, Kerala**, on a fieldtrip following the launch of the LAI campaign in Delhi. The team further observed several more individuals adjacent to a streambed under leaf litter, in closed forest cover within the Kunthi River watershed. Rediscovered by **Don Church** (GWC), **Robin Moore** (IUCN/ASG), **Franky Bossuyt** (VUB), **Ines Van Bocxlaer** (VUB), **David Gower** (NHM), **Mark Wilkinson** (NHM), **Darrel Frost** (AMNH), **Wes Sechrest** (GWC) and **SD Biju** (University of Delhi). Listed by the IUCN as Data Deficient.
- **Elegant Tropical Frog** (*Micrixalus elegans*) Known only from the original description based on a collection in 1937. The original specimen was subsequently lost and the species evaded detection until it was rediscovered after 73 years from **Kempholey, Karnataka** by **KV Gururaja** (IISc, Bangalore), **KP Dinesh** (ZSI, Calicut) and **SD Biju** (University of Delhi) in a forest stream-bed at the original collection area. The frog lives in forest streams and calls from the edge of rivers where it presumably breeds. The area is a hotspot for amphibian diversity, containing another 20 species. Currently there is a hydroelectric project proposal in the area and the site is urgently in need of protection. Listed by the IUCN as Data Deficient.

Amphibians are the most threatened land animals on our planet: Amphibians are fascinating animals. They are the first land animals to have a backbone. They have seen giant dinosaurs come and go but have managed to survive through tumultuous periods of earth's history. However, currently, mostly because of man made reasons, **one in three** amphibian species faces risk of extinction. It comes as no surprise that amphibians are the most threatened group among the vertebrates on planet Earth. The amphibian fauna of India is also facing high risk of rapid extinction due to habitat destruction.

LOST! Amphibians of India initiative: LAI initiative presently has 150 members. Members are drawn from different walks of life - scientists, students, general public.

Currently 15 teams are pursuing the remaining 45 species. Each team is led by an amphibian specialist working together with LAI coordinator Dr SD Biju. These teams are enthusiastically gearing up for intensive field expeditions throughout the country during the next nine months.

The coming together of people from diverse backgrounds highlights the importance of this initiative for discovering and documenting India's rich amphibian diversity and amphibian conservation. Please visit the website <http://www.lostspeciesindia.org/LAI2/index.php> for more information and institutional affiliation.

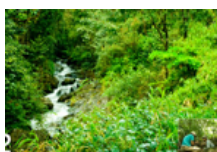
Outcomes of LOST! Amphibians of India Initiative so far: As a result of untiring effort of scientists, five out of the fifty lost Indian amphibians are now rediscovered. Search for the remaining 45 species goes on. It is a tall order but scientists are optimistic, with guarded confidence though, that the remaining 45 lost species will also be rediscovered. Whatever the final outcome, the expedition findings will expand our global understanding of the threats to amphibians and bring us closer to finding solutions for their protection. Bold conservation efforts are not only critical for the future of many amphibians themselves, but also for the benefit of humans who indirectly rely on the amphibians for requirements like pest control, nutrient cycling and other such services. Scientists, wildlife enthusiasts and frog lovers hope that the places that frogs have made their homes will once again throb with their calls during monsoon.

Civil society involvement: The LAI initiative has the enthusiastic support of the cricket legend Mr Anil Kumble and the Writer & Producer of The Simpsons, Mr George Meyer. <http://www.lostspeciesindia.org/LAI2/>

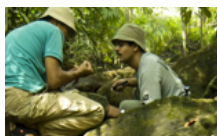
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Following **field expeditions in India** (thumbnail images below are available for media on request).



Expedition in search of ELEGANT TROPICAL FROG: *Micrixalus elegans*: Kempholey Forest in Karnataka, (inset) Drs K P Dinesh and Gururaja searching for frogs inside the forest. © SD Biju



Expedition in search of ELEGANT TROPICAL FROG: *Micrixalus elegans*: Kempholey Forest in Karnataka, Drs K P Dinesh and Gururaja searching for frogs inside the forest. © SD Biju



Expedition in search of DEHRADUN STREAM FROG: *Amolops chakrataensis*: Uttarakhand, complete team members left to right: Robin Suyesh, SD Biju, Rachunliu G Kamei, Sonali Garg, Gargi Sircar and Pratyush. © SD Biju



Expedition: *Micrixalus elegans*: Kempholey Forest in Karnataka, SD Biju and KP Dinesh taking pictures © Gururaja

Note to editors:

The University of Delhi is a premier University of India and is known for its high standards in teaching and research. The Vice President of India is the University's Chancellor. DU is a Central University established in 1922. For more information, visit: <http://www.du.ac.in> The Systematics Lab is a unit of the Department of Environmental Biology and contributes to conservation of amphibians through discovery and documentation of species. For more information, visit: <http://www.frogindia.org/>

Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) – GWC supports life on Earth by advancing both academic and applied approaches to conservation research, action, and education. Along with its strategic worldwide partners, GWC is pursuing a common goal: to save wildlife species from extinction and

better understand and maintain the natural world and its biological diversity. For more information, visit: www.globalwildlife.org

IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) - The ASG of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) strives to conserve biological diversity by stimulating, developing, and executing practical programs to conserve amphibians and their habitats around the world. This is achieved by supporting a global web of partners to develop funding, capacity and technology transfer to achieve shared, strategic amphibian conservation goals. For more information, visit: www.amphibians.org

Natural History Museum (London)- The mission of the Natural History Museum (London) is to maintain and develop its collections and use them to promote the discovery, understanding, responsible use and enjoyment of the natural world. For more information, visit: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/>

Conservation International (CI) - Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature for the well-being of humanity. With headquarters in Washington, DC, CI works in more than 40 countries on four continents. For more information, visit www.conservation.org

Arya Vidyapeeth College, Guwahati, Assam - For more information, visit <http://www.aryavidyapeethcollege.org/front.htm>

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