

The Amphibian Foundation Partners with the South Fork Natural History Museum to Protect the Blue-spotted Salamander, which Faces Increasing Threats

For immediate release

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ATLANTA, GA Friday, October 29, 2021 - The Amphibian Foundation issued the following statement from Mark Mandica, Executive Director:

The Amphibian Foundation (AF), in partnership with Andy Sabin and Frank Quevedo at the South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO) in New York, launched a new conservation program to protect the Blue-spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*). Blue-spotted Salamander populations have an extremely small and fragmented range, and are especially threatened by habitat loss and amphibian disease (e.g., chytrid fungus, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*). AF will rear and study the species in captivity and help SOFO monitor a wild population in Long Island, NY.

The Blue-spotted Salamander is endemic to northeastern United States and southeastern Canada, yet there is mounting uncertainty of the species' true range. The salamander will readily hybridize with the Jefferson's Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*), making it difficult to identify true Blue-spotted salamanders from the hybrid species.

This summer, staff from SOFO collected 18 true Blue-spotted Salamander larvae from a population which exists on the eastern tip of Long Island. The larval salamanders, collected with permission from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, made the journey to AF in Atlanta to be reared and studied. The larvae have since metamorphosed into tiny, beautiful salamanders.

AF will study the cues necessary to produce healthy Blue-spotted Salamanders in captivity, which could be candidates for release into the wild should further conservation measures be warranted. AF's Conservation Research Bridge Program will also continue to work with SOFO to monitor the salamanders on eastern Long Island and help determine if the current populations are stable. The ultimate goal is that these species are, and remain, healthy in the wild.

The Amphibian Foundation, an Atlanta-based nonprofit, leads one-of-a-kind conservation research programs to address threats in the southeastern United States and across the globe. Amphibians are facing unprecedented threats globally. According to the IUCN, 43 percent of the world's amphibians are experiencing catastrophic declines or are already extinct. There are many documented causes for these declines, one of the deadliest being emerging infectious diseases, usually spread by people who inadvertently expose amphibians with no natural resistance to these diseases. Emerging diseases can be particularly concerning to species with small fragmented ranges like the Blue-spotted Salamander.

Visit AF's website for more information: <http://bridge.amphibianfoundation.org/>
Call Mark Mandica at 562-774-2248 or email Mark@amphibianfoundation.org

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[High resolution photos can be accessed and downloaded here.](#)

Photo Captions:

Image 1: A Blue-spotted Salamander, *Ambystoma laterale*, *in situ* on eastern Long Island, NY. This is a species listed by the state as **Special Concern** and it only occurs in a limited number of wetlands on Long Island. (© South Fork Natural History Museum)

Image 2: A Blue-spotted Salamander, *Ambystoma laterale*, *ex situ* at the Amphibian Foundation in Atlanta. This animal is part of an assurance colony at the Foundation and once it becomes sexually mature, it will become part of a vital conservation program for the species. (© Amphibian Foundation)