

## **Amphibian Foundation Statement on *Ecnomiohyla valancifer* Frogs Housed at Headquarters**

### **For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Mark Mandica, mark@amphibianfound.org; 562 774 2248

ATLANTA, GA Tuesday, March 31, 2020 - The Amphibian Foundation issued the following statement from Mark Mandica, Executive Director:

In 2018, *Ecnomiohyla valancifer* frogs were donated to the Amphibian Foundation for housing and care. At the time, we did not know the species of the frogs. After considerable research in collaboration with a local expert, the frogs were identified as *Ecnomiohyla valancifer*, a critically endangered micro-endemic species from Mexico. Believing that the imperiled species likely entered the United States illegally, we took appropriate action by reporting the frogs to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Department of Law Enforcement. The illegal trade of any species exacerbates the fragility of amphibian populations across the world. We continue to work with U.S. and Mexican government authorities to identify the route of transportation and determine permanent housing for these frogs.

USFWS has an open investigation regarding the route of these frogs from Mexico to the United States. The Amphibian Foundation works closely with USFWS on a variety of conservation projects and are supporting their efforts. We provided all requested data, including information concerning the donor of the frogs, in the hopes that USFWS will be able to locate and shut down the route by which the frogs arrived in the United States. These *Ecnomiohyla valancifer* were tested for genetic analysis in order to compare them with other frogs under USFWS supervision. Consistent with the practice established in previous cases in which the Amphibian Foundation has worked with USFWS, the Service has requested that the Amphibian Foundation hold these frogs solely as evidentiary documentation until a resolution has been reached.

The Amphibian Foundation is also working with Mexico's government, specifically the law enforcement agency, Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente (PROFEPA), in their investigations. Additionally, we have connected with Mexican authorities within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in an effort to develop a legal and ethical plan to either return the frogs home or transfer them to an authorized organization working on the conservation of the species.

The Amphibian Foundation, established in Atlanta more than three years ago, is committed to the conservation of amphibians worldwide. Our primary focus and expertise is on species native to

the southeastern United States. We take amphibian conservation extremely seriously—it is our sole purpose. Under The Amphibian Foundation mission, we only hold amphibians for conservation research or as education animals, as such we are uniquely positioned to offer support for critical projects in the southeastern United States.

Please contact us directly with any questions in this matter. We have also been authorized to provide a USFWS contact for questions directed to The Service.

For the Amphibians,

Mark Mandica  
Executive Director

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