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INCREASING THE ODDS FOR AMPHIBIANS AS THEY FACE A LONG-TERM PANDEMIC OF THEIR OWN

Wildlife Conservation Nonprofit Partners with Celebrated Filmmakers to Give Frogs and Salamanders a Leg Up Against Chytrid Fungus

UNITED STATES, April 18, 2023 - The Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC) and partners, filmmakers [Chelsea Jolly](#) and [David Herasimtschuk](#), are working to increase the odds for toads, frogs, and salamanders facing the worldwide amphibian pandemic, chytridiomycosis, which has already led to 90 extinctions.

Chytridiomycosis is caused by a chytrid fungus called *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, or Bd for short, and the fungus is present throughout the U.S. and other countries. Over the past 30 years, it has resulted in worldwide declines in one of every 16 known amphibian species. In all, Bd has infected more than 500 amphibian species.

To raise awareness about the threat of this pathogen, Jolly and Herasimtschuk produced the short film *Jojo - A Toad Musical*. The film will premiere at Mountainfilm in Telluride, Colorado, May 25-29, 2023. It tells the story of a charismatic boy named Jojo, whose infectious curiosity and love of music and amphibians show us what we risk losing if we lose these fascinating members of our ecosystems. (Click [here](#) to view the trailer.)

Jojo - A Toad Musical "goes beyond the usual stories and characters that we often see in conservation films and shines a light on new ways we can teach audiences about amphibian conservation," said Herasimtschuk.

The filmmakers teamed up with ARC to help ensure that future generations can experience the wonders of exploration and the joy of seeing wild toads. The film will raise awareness of this amphibian pandemic and provide simple solutions for those who want to help while elevating ARC's on-the-ground conservation work. Jolly stated, "We chose to partner with ARC on this project because of their endless commitment and dedication to protecting amphibian and reptile populations."

Because the fungus is present globally, ARC's strategy is to help amphibian populations cope with the new normal of chytrid in their habitats. The organization's place-based approach of establishing Priority Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Areas (PARCAs) across the U.S. and its conservation and habitat restoration efforts bolster amphibian populations against chytridiomycosis.

ARC Conservation Program Coordinator José Garrido explained, "ARC's on-the-ground habitat restoration efforts increase the size, connectivity, and frequency of amphibian populations across the landscape. Often, this is done by improving habitat quality and availability or by reducing the factors that contribute to the spread of chytrid."

The ability of a wildlife species to respond to disease depends on the health of individual members of the population and the stressors they face. Each environmental threat, be it climate change, habitat destruction, loss of prey, or invasive species, makes fighting off disease at the population level more difficult. Often, chytrid is not a death sentence; rather, it is the straw that breaks the frog's back. ARC's work is focused on bolstering amphibians against Bd by increasing the number of populations and population sizes and connecting populations so that genes can flow and inbreeding is less likely.

For these reasons and more, ARC's national strategy, which the organization implements at a local level, is centered on restoring and creating healthy habitats in PARCAs. Healthy habitats enable species' population sizes to increase and thrive and for species to establish a greater number of populations. To further boost populations, ARC also translocates or reintroduces captive-bred animals into suitable habitats.

In addition to these population- and habitat-level efforts, it is crucial that everyone do their part to stop the spread of Bd. This is why awareness garnered from the short film *Jojo - A Toad Musical* will be of critical importance. Read [ARC's blog post](#) to learn what people can do to prevent Bd transmission.

About Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC)

Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy, or ARC, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on identifying and conserving the highest priority places for amphibians and reptiles in the United States. We protect endangered amphibians and reptiles through a strategic, scientific, and passionate approach. We believe the conservation of amphibians, reptiles, and the habitats they depend on is vitally important. To learn more, visit ARCProtects.org.

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