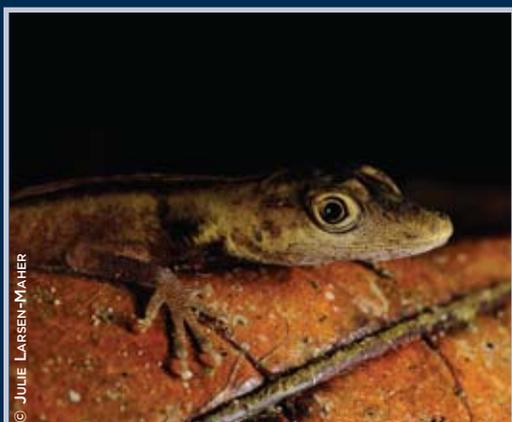


ZCOG SCHOLARSHIP PROVIDES ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR LATIN AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS



Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions on earth, as well as a region that faces significant conservation challenges from accelerated habitat loss and species extinctions. Protecting and preserving the area's rich biodiversity, which includes approximately 27 percent of the world's mammals, 43 percent of all birds, and nearly half of the planet's amphibians, is a conservation challenge that requires collective action from a diverse set of institutional actors, including zoos and aquariums. With annual visitation exceeding 100 million people, Latin American zoos and aquariums are uniquely positioned to impact regional conservation efforts. Located mostly in urban settings, Latin America's zoological facilities possess tremendous potential to inspire environmental awareness by offering visitors opportunities to interact with native flora and fauna and to learn how to support wildlife conservation

programs. Yet many Latin American facilities lack the resources and training necessary to fulfill their role as proactive wildlife conservation centers. Dr. Mauricio Fabry Otte, Director of Chile's National Zoo and President of Latin America's regional zoo and aquarium association (ALPZA) cites a "traditional lack of access to professional training opportunities" as a significant impediment to the institutional development of Latin American zoos and aquariums. This lack of access to professional development also limits the potential of Latin American zoological facilities to contribute to conservation efforts.

"Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime."

Chinese proverb attributed to Lao Tzu



To address these professional training need the Zoo Conservation Outreach Group (ZCOG), with support from its member institutions, and in partnership with AZA's Professional Development Committee and Professional Development Program, established a scholarship program designed to provide Latin American zoo and aquarium professionals with opportunities to obtain the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to carry out their conservation missions. The annual scholarship awards include the ZCOG Conservation Training Award, Les Whitt Memorial Award, Cameron Park Zoo Amphibian Conservation Award, Ellen Trout Zoo Crocodylian Conservation Award, and Dickerson Park Zoo Conservation Education Award. Together, these scholarships provide opportunities for Latin American zoo and aquarium staff to participate in AZA Professional Training Program courses like population management, institutional record keeping, and conservation education, among others. The scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis by AZA Professional Development Committee review and cover all course participant costs, including registration, transportation, hotel accommodations, and meals.

In less than three years, ZCOG's Conservation Scholarships Program has sponsored the participation of 12 Latin American zoo and aquarium professionals in AZA training courses like Crocodylian Biology and Captive Management, Advances in Animal Keeping, and Amphibian Biology, Conservation, and Management. The participation of Latin American colleagues adds diversity to AZA courses, allows for the exchange of information, ideas and experiences, and helps build lasting partnerships. At the same time, AZA courses help train Latin America's future conservation leaders. Jim Fleshman, director of the Cameron Park Zoo (an AZA accredited facility that sponsors ZCOG's Cameron Park Zoo Amphibian Conservation Award), sees the scholarship program as an opportunity for AZA member institutions to give back to the global zoo community, and to help build the institutional capacity of zoos and aquariums in countries where the conservation need is most urgent. Others, like Mike Crocker, director of Springfield, Missouri's Dickerson Park Zoo and Steve McCusker, director of the San Antonio Zoo and Aquarium, view professional development and the ZCOG Conservation Scholarship Program as a "means of improving long-term management and protection of wildlife and natural resources in Latin America" and a "way to celebrate a collective passion for conservation with our neighbors to the south," respectively.

Professional training provides immediate access to information and skills and enables the development of long-term partnerships that are more likely to produce sustainable solutions. If applied to global biodiversity conservation, the adage "if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach a man to fish you will help feed him for a lifetime" is therefore an endorsement of professional training and capacity building as an effective means of advancing long-term wildlife and habitat preservation.

For information on how your institution can become part of ZCOG's Conservation Scholarships Program, please contact Daniel Hilliard, PhD, Executive Director, Zoo Conservation Outreach Group at dhilliard@auduboninstitute.org or (301) 562-0777.



AMPHIBIAN BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

The amphibian crisis is significant, it is worldwide, and it is all too real. At least a third of all amphibian species are threatened with extinction, a fact that represents a significant conservation emergency. The only hope of saving many of these unique and valuable creatures is to create assurance populations for animals in secure facilities, isolating them from the many threats that endanger their futures in the wild (disease, habitat destruction, etc.). These *ex-situ* programs are stopgaps that require dedicated, trained staff to maintain animals properly while others work to mitigate threats in the wild and hopefully make it possible for these species to exist again in nature. AZA's Amphibian Biology and Conservation Management School (ABCM) was created six years ago specifically to address the amphibian crisis by increasing the available expertise (capacity) in zoos and other conservation facilities for these assurance populations.

The amphibian crisis is a global issue, requiring individual efforts in range countries and international partnerships to assist these efforts. ABCM has taken on this challenge by providing training for many international colleagues from 15 countries and one U.S. territory, literally from every continent except Antarctica. Over the last three years and five classes, international colleagues have represented 20 percent of the total students attending.

The international students not only learn a great deal by attending ABCM, they have also brought their own distinctive perspectives and knowledge to the class. This has added an extra dimension for the U.S. students attending, who get to learn about conservation issues, conservation initiatives, and conservation solutions from very different viewpoints. Even more noteworthy is the networking opportunities that has been created for AZA and international colleagues through ABCM. The student interactions have developed into several collaborative conservation efforts creating partnerships reaching far beyond North America. This is a worldwide crisis, it needs worldwide attention, and it needs worldwide collaboration. ABCM is one program that has made substantial contributions to amphibian conservation by creating additional capacity throughout the world to deal with this crisis.

R. ANDREW ODUM AND RON GAGLIARDO,
COURSE ADMINISTRATORS

Scholarship Testimonials from Latin America



Claudio Soto-Azat, MV, MSc.

Chilean amphibians are characterized by a high degree of endemism. Nearly half of the 50 described species are threatened by habitat destruction, pollution and disease. Some of these species, such as Darwin's frog (*Rhinoderma darwinii*, *R. rufum*) and the Bullock's false toad (*Telmatobufo bullocki*) are on the edge of extinction.

Since 2008, I have been involved in amphibian disease research and conservation – including work with these two critically endangered species.

Attending the 2009 AZA Amphibian Biology, Conservation and Management course at the Toledo Zoo provided me with the opportunity to learn from internationally recognized amphibian scientists, conservationists and managers over the course of a pretty intense week. As a result of attending the course, I feel far more confident in my work.

I also had the chance to meet a number of wonderful colleagues from the United States and South America – a number

of whom I have kept in contact with. We are even working together on opportunities to collaborate on some high priority projects in Chile.

The ZCOG scholarship allowed me to attend the course – and this has directly benefited my work on chytridiomycosis, *Rhinoderma darwinii* conservation and amphibian rehabilitation.



Luis Soto Rendon

I live in a country which is blessed with immense biodiversity – a vast variety of climates, habitats and of course animals. In Mexico, our zoological institutions play an important role in raising the awareness of people who live close to all these species.

This year, I was privileged to receive the support from ZCOG that allowed me to travel and take the Animal Training Applications course.

The whole process proved valuable to me. Applying for the scholarship gave me some experience on how to apply for support from another institution for example. Without the support of the ZCOG scholarship, I would not have had the resources to take the course and meet and learn from all the professional instructors and colleagues who participated.

The topics covered during the Animal Training Applications course exceeded all my expectations. They provided me with the tools necessary to manage a training program at my institution – and this in turn has had a very positive effect on the daily husbandry. I also picked up some tools that allow me to communicate what I have learned with my co-workers – ensuring that the benefits of this single scholarship accrue to a larger group of people.