

Frog Thought To Be Extinct Found By School Boy And Breeds For First Time



PLANTS AND ANIMALS

THE FROG WAS ONCE SO COMMON, IT COULD BE FOUND IN THE THOUSANDS. © LUI

The once-prolific Jambato harlequin frog was thought to have been extinct for the last 28 years, until a school boy rediscovered it high in the Ecuadorean mountains. As well as being awarded the \$1,000 bounty for finding the amphibian, the young boy and his family may have secured the future of the endangered frog, as it has now [successfully been bred for the first time](#).

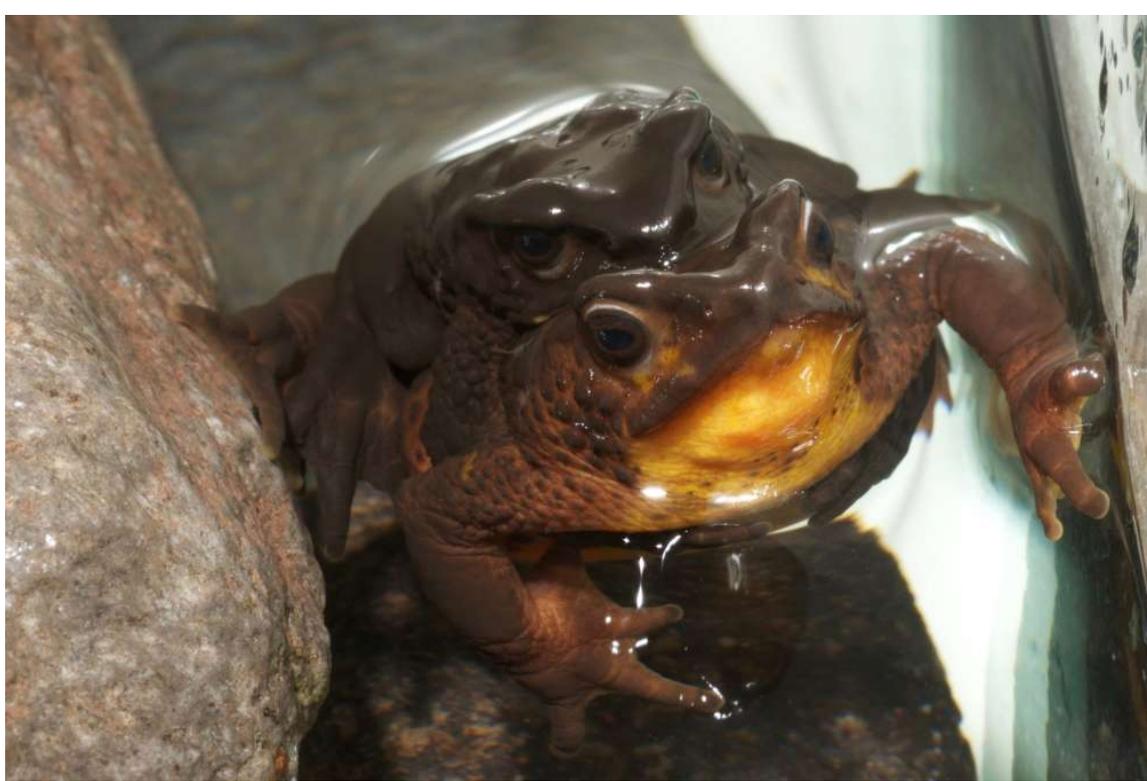


**By Josh
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The Jambato harlequin frog (*Atelopus ignescens*) never used to be this endangered. In fact, it [was once so common](#) that people living in Ecuador had to be careful not to step on the amphibian as it scuttled through people's homes. Children used to play with the frog and traditional healers used them in remedies, while reports from 1865 state how people found hundreds of them near streams and ponds.

People who live in the mountains of Ecuador remember seeing them as recently as 1985, when they scuttled in the thousands along roads after it had rained to migrate to pools and rivers to mate. By 1988, however, the amphibian had disappeared



The frog is strange, as it does not hop but runs. © Luis A. Coloma

Conservationists had presumed that the once numerous frog had become the latest victim of both climate change and the virulent fungus that has swept the world, killing off species after species of frog. Yet in 2016, the [Jambatu Center for Research and Conservation of Amphibians](#) offered up a \$1,000 reward for anyone who could find the Jambatu harlequin frog alive and well. They were not actually expecting anyone to find it, but did it instead to raise awareness of other amphibians in the region.

That was until a young school boy and his family came across a small population of the frogs clinging on for survival in a remote region of the mountains. Researchers were stunned and managed to recover 43 adult frogs. Bringing them in to a captive breeding facility, they were faced with the not insignificant task of securing the future of the rare amphibian, while the boy's education will now be paid for too.



The frogs have laid 500 eggs so far. © Luis A. Coloma

After months of trying, in which the frogs would happily mate but produce no eggs, the researchers decided to move the amphibians into an outside enclosure. Whatever the reason, this seemed to do the trick, and they managed to get the Jambato harlequin frog to lay [around 500 eggs](#). Having hatched into tadpoles, it is hoped that they will be released back into the wild in the next few years and help the species to recover.