

A LOST SALAMANDER WAS REDISCOVERED IN GUATEMALA AFTER 40 YEARS AND SCIENTISTS ARE IN AWE

BY ROBERT VALENCIA ON 10/30/17 AT 10:01 PM

A salamander species re-emerged in the Guatemalan forest after more than four decades, and scientists couldn't be happier.

Through its Search for Lost Initiatives initiative, the Texas-based organization Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) said in a statement that the rediscovery of the Jackson's Climbing salamander 42 years later is "incredible and unexpected."

The elusive amphibian is part of a list of the "[25 Most Wanted Lost Species](#)," which includes rare animals that haven't been spotted for many decades, such as the Fernandina Galapagos tortoise, the Scarlet Harlequin frog, the Wondiwoi tree kangaroo and the silver-backed chevrotain, among others. The list comes from a full collection of [1,200 species of animals](#) and plants that are missing across the globe.



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Jackson's Climbing Salamander rediscovered in Guatemala 42 years after last sighting! disq.us/t/2vecywy Photo: Carlos Vasquez Almazan

The rediscovery occurred months after an expedition to Guatemala's Cuchumatanes Mountain range was looking for the salamander. In a coordinated effort with partner organization Rainforest Trust, the GWC established the Finca San Isidro Amphibian reserve in 2015 to help protect the animal's habitat.

A guard at the reserve discovered a young salamander—the third one ever seen—on the edge of the premise while he was out on patrol this month. After he took a photo of the animal, he sent it to Guatemala's Universidad de San Carlos curator Carlos Vasquez, who later confirmed the identity of the Jackson's climbing salamander.

"I love this story because it conveys how protecting habitat gives species a fighting chance to survive on this planet," Don Church, president of GWC, said in the statement. "This rediscovery can only be a good omen for the future of the Search for Lost Species campaign. It's a sign that if we get out there and work at it, many of these species can be found and saved."

Vasquez, who has traveled more than 30 times to find the species nicknamed the "golden wonder" thanks to its yellow pigmentation, spent more than 3,000 hours in his quest. "We had started to fear that the species was gone, and now it's like it has come back from extinction," Vasquez said. "It's a beautiful story, and marks a promised future for the conservation of this special region."

In an interview with the [Huffington Post in April](#), Church said that this campaign offers "a message of hope and opportunity" to protect the ecosystem, even if all of the species are not found. He told the website that his intent is to highlight the profile of the missing species.

In recent years, Latin America has witnessed a [discovery of new species](#). In 2013, scientists from Smithsonian Institution found the *olinguito*, the first carnivore species to be discovered in the Americas—specifically in Colombia and Ecuador—in more than three decades. Other newfound animals include the [Brazilian tapir](#) and a [rabbit from Suriname](#).