

'Golden wonder' salamander seen for first time since '75

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Photo: Carlos Vasquez Almazan

The Jackson's climbing salamander (*Bolitoglossa jacksoni*) was believed to be extinct. Humans hadn't seen one since 1975, despite its bright yellow skin. But now, 42 years since its last sighting, one has been spotted at the Finca San Isidro Amphibian Reserve in Guatemala's Cuchumatanes Mountains.

Also known as the "golden wonder," Jackson's climbing salamander has been seen twice, counting its discovery in 1975. Ramos León, a guard at the reserve, holds the honor of being the third person ever to see the salamander. He snapped a picture of the salamander and sent it to Carlos Vasquez, curator of herpetology at USAC University in Guatemala and coordinator of the amphibian conservation program at local NGO and Global Wildlife Conservation partner FUNDAECO.

Vasquez has mounted more than 30 expeditions since 2005 into the Cuchumatanes in search of the salamander. This year, he led a workshop for the reserve's guards to explain where they might find it. He even left a wanted poster-style flyer for the guards to refer to.

"I explained to them how important this species is and I left a poster there so they could see a picture of the Jackson's climbing salamander every single day," Vasquez [said in a statement](#). "We had started to fear that the species was gone, and now it's like it has come back from extinction. It's a beautiful story, and marks a promised future for the conservation of this special region."

Conservation is the name of the game now. We know very little about Jackson's climbing salamander, but what we do know is that the specimen found this year was at an elevation about 300 meters higher than where it was first discovered. It could be part of the salamander's natural range, or it could be that the salamander is responding to changes in climate.

But now that we know this golden wonder of a salamander is alive, work can begin to understand it better. Vasquez and his team will conduct research at and around where León rediscovered the salamander to gain more insight into the site's ecology and to hopefully assess the species' overall population.



Photo of wanted poster courtesy of Carlos Vasquez Almazan