

'Extinct' salamander discovered in remote part of Guatemala

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This remarkable little salamander – just two and a half inches in length – was thought extinct for more than forty years. Now, the amphibian, nicknamed the ‘golden wonder’, has been rediscovered as part of a worldwide attempt to see if 1200 *lost* species still exist in the wild.



Jackson's Climbing Salamander. Photo by Carlos Vasquez Almazan

The salamander was found in a remote part of the Finca San Isidro Amphibian Reserve in Guatemala in Central America by a local man. It was just the third time recorded in which a human had laid eyes on the Jackson's climbing salamander, which had been feared extinct since 1975. Carlos Vásquez Almazán, a conservationist involved in the hunt for the 'golden wonder', explained how he learned about its rediscovery. He told Lonely Planet: "they began to describe it to me and when they told me it has the yellow legs ... I was almost sure that they had really found it. I took a deep breath for a couple of hours, until they managed to send me a photo through WhatsApp because the region is remote and there is little good internet signal. [And sure enough] it was definitely the sought-after and awaited [salamander] ... for years sought in the mountains of Barillas, Huehuetenango and found at last by a young man from the Q'anjob'al Mayan community."



Jackson's Climbing Salamander. Photo by Carlos Vasquez Almazan

Carlos, who has been on thirty expeditions to find the salamander, said that the rediscovery offered hope that other 'lost' species might not have vanished. He said: "having found this species is like having returned it from extinction, we were beginning to believe it was extinct and with this discovery it gives us hope that we can recover much of the diversity of our forests that we believe has already been lost. We see that nature is still struggling to recover and populate its original sites."
