

## The World's Loneliest Frog Gets A Dating Profile To Help Him Find Love



PLANTS AND ANIMALS

FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS, ROMEO HAS BEEN UNLUCKY IN LOVE. DIRK ERCKEN/ARTURO MUÑOZ

If you think you have it tough in finding the love of your life, then spare a thought for poor old Romeo. The old crooner is, unfortunately, the last of his species and has been looking for love for the last 10 years, to no avail.

Romeo is a Sehuencas water frog (*Telmatobius yuracare*), a little understood and critically endangered amphibian from South America. When he was captured from the wild in 2008, the biologists who now look after him knew the situation was bad. They just didn't know it was this bad. For the last decade, the biologists have failed to find a single other Sehuencas water frog, male or female.

The environmental group Global Wildlife Conservation has been trying over the past decade to find Romeo a mate and save the species. This Valentine's Day, they have teamed up with Match in an attempt to boost his odds by creating his own dating profile. They are then going to launch a series of expeditions to locations where other Sehuencas water frogs may be, in the hope of finding Romeo a mate.



“Romeo started to call for a mate about a year after he was brought into captivity, but those calls have slowed in the last few years,” explains Arturo Muñoz, founder of the Bolivian Amphibian Initiative, who have been looking after Romeo, in an emailed statement. “We don’t want him to lose hope, and we continue to remain hopeful that others are out there so we can establish a conservation breeding program to save this species.”

The Sehuencas water frog is native to Bolivia, where it once lived in small montane streams in the Yungas cloud rainforest. In the past, it was known from at least 10 different locations, with tadpoles being found in relative abundance in its lofty habitat of crystal clear streams and alpine marshes.

But over the years, it has started to disappear. In 2008, a team of biologists brought into captivity a single male Sehuencas water frog, with the hope of starting a breeding colony to boost the number of the frogs and save them from the fate of so many other amphibian species in recent years.

Over the last 10 years, however, not a single other individual has been found, giving Romeo the dubious title of the last of his species.

But time is running out. It is thought the frogs have been hit hard by the devastating disease chytridiomycosis, which has driven many other frogs to extinction. As if that wasn’t enough, the Bolivian government is planning to build a dam in the amphibian's forested home.