Amphibians are without a doubt the most threatened group of animals on the planet: nearly 1/3 (2000) of all known species are facing extinction.

In South Africa, 30% of frog species are Red Listed, i.e. threatened with extinction.

200 amphibian species have become extinct since 1979. This is way above the natural rate of extinction!

There are six major factors negatively affecting amphibians, and all are due to human activity: habitat destruction, infectious diseases (especially chytrid fungus), pollution & pesticides, climate change, invasive species, and over-harvesting for the pet and food trades.

Many of these threats work together in synergy creating the perfect storm for extinction.

Frogs are an integral part of the food chain as both predator and prey.

Frogs are bio-indicators, i.e. their presence indicates a healthy environment – the fact that they disappearing worldwide should be a warning that our global ecosystem is in trouble.

Frogs play an important in pest-control by eating huge numbers of mosquitoes, flies and ticks.

Frogs can provide important medicines for humans.

Frogs are incredibly diverse, beautiful and interesting!
FUN FROG FACTS

• There are 7,116 known amphibian species, of which 6,277 are anurans (frogs and toads), 647 are caudates (newts and salamanders), and 192 are gymnophiones (caecilians).

• The word amphibian is derived from Greek and means ‘two lives’, referring to the fact that most amphibians spend their larval stage as aquatic, herbivorous tadpole, and their adult stage as terrestrial carnivore. However, some amphibians spend virtually their entire lives in the water (i.e. African clawed frog *Xenopus laevis*, and mudpuppies *Necturus*). Others, like the Puerto Rican coqui *Eleutherodactylus coqui* or Dunn’s salamander *Plethodon dunni* from Oregon, spend their entire lives on land: they lay their eggs in moist leaf-litter, bypass the tadpole stage and may never enter a water body.

• Not all frogs have tadpoles. There are many terrestrial frog species that emerge as froglets directly from the egg, bypassing the tadpole stage altogether.

• Amphibians are the oldest land vertebrates. *Ichthyostega* was an amphibian species that lived in Greenland 362 million years ago.

• The smallest frogs are the *Paedophryne dekot* and *Paedophryne verrucosa* from Papua New Guinea, sizing in at only 9 mm in length.

• The world’s largest frog is the Goliath Frog *Conraua goliath*, which lives in western Africa. They can grow to be over 30 cm (1 ft) long, and weigh over 3 kg.

• Most adult frogs have lungs like yours. However, amphibians have permeable skin that allows them to absorb both water and oxygen directly from the environment, right through their skin.

• A batrachologist is a person who studies amphibians. Formerly, the term herpetologist was used, but this name encompassed those who studied amphibians and/or reptiles.

• Some species only live a few years, but many live 6 or 7 years. The African Clawed Frog *Xenopus laevis* and the Green Tree Frog *Litoria caerulea* can live about 30 years in captivity.

• Skin secretions from at least three species of Australian frogs (the Green Treefrog *Litoria caerulea*, the Southern Orange-eyed Treefrog *Litoria chloris*, and the Green-Eyed Treefrog *Litoria genimaculata*) can completely inhibit HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

HOW TO HELP

• Don’t use harmful chemicals and pesticides at home and in the garden.

• Build a frog pond at home or at your school!

• Conserve resources – especially water!

• Reduce, Re-use, Recycle!

• Give toads a brake! Slow down on wet nights to avoid squashing frogs on roads.

• Do NOT eat frogs’ legs.

• Eat less meat: It has been estimated that producing a pound of beef requires 100 times more water than does producing an equal amount of wheat. Further, a cattle ranching is dependent on open spaces, and this generally means large-scale deforestation, such as the slash-and-burn agriculture.

• Use rechargeable batteries.

• Don’t drink bottled water. According to the Pacific Institute, the production of 30 billion plastic bottles requires the equivalent of 17 million barrels of oil (enough to fuel more than one million vehicles for a year!), produces more than 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide, and uses three times the amount of water than ends up in the bottle.

• Learn more about frogs.

• Take part in Save Our Frogs Day, February 2014. For more info contact: jeannet@ewt.org.za

• Donate to the EWT-Threatened Amphibian Programme: http://www.ewt.org.za/programmes/ACP/acp.html

African Clawed Frog

Goliath Frog

African Clawed Frog

Paedophryne dekot

Goliath Frog

Paedophryne verrucosa

Sharp-nosed Reed Frog