

## **Awesome Amphibians**

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## **Why Are the Frogs Fading?**

**Amphibians face a number of threats in the near future, including habitat loss, climate change, pollution and pesticides, introduced species and diseases. In fact, they are facing the most significant mass extinction since the dinosaur.**

### **Pollution and Pests**

Amphibians are often referred to as the “canaries in the coal mine” for their ability to warn humans of increasing environmental threats. Their permeable skin allows toxins to easily enter their bodies. As a result, they are often the first species to feel the effects of a decline in environmental conditions. They are particularly sensitive to pollution, making them important warnings for potential threats to humans.

### **One Funky Fungus**

Amphibian chytrid fungus is a disease that is deadly to hundreds of amphibian species. It has quickly spread from Africa across the planet over the past 70-80 years. Global climate change may have worsened the problem.

Amphibian chytrid fungus is a disease that affects the skin of amphibians. Their skin is a vital organ that they use to drink and breathe. Once it has infected an area, the amphibian chytrid fungus can kill 80 percent of amphibians within months, leading to widespread extinctions. Currently, chytrid can't be treated or stopped in the wild, even in protected areas. Scientists are working to find a cure for this deadly disease.

### **There's No Place Like Home**

Many frogs and amphibians are losing their homes to the clearing of land for agricultural and development use. Habitat fragmentation occurs when areas are separated by human developments. As a result, amphibians are no longer able to migrate to breeding ponds.

### **You're Getting Warmer**

Warmer temperatures are drying the moist areas where amphibians thrive. This stress may cause amphibians to be more at risk to diseases. In addition, it is believed that chytrid's spread and effects may intensify with climate change. Warmer temperatures are driving some populations to higher altitudes to remain in their preferred temperature zone. Other groups that become stressed and have nowhere to go are disappearing.

**“Awesome Amphibians,” a new exhibit in The Living World at the Saint Louis Zoo, opens on Friday, February 29, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. “Awesome Amphibians” will be open every day thereafter from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission to the Saint Louis Zoo and the exhibit is free.**