Ex situ breeding results for the Great Crested Newt in Belgium

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The Research Institute Nature and Forest of the Flemish Government in Belgium has a long tradition of developing species recovery programs for endangered and protected aquatic species. This knowledge and the strengths of the fish farm in Linkebeek (located south of Brussels, in Belgium) were used to set up an intensive breeding program for the highly threatened Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). The populations of these newts have declined rapidly in Belgium over the past decades. Changed land use and a far-reaching fragmentation of the landscape are the main causes.

Also due to the construction of a reduced tidal area, a population of Great Crested Newts is likely to disappear due to the effects of tidal action. This is the reason why we chose to use these wild salamanders for a breeding program. With the farmed offspring, nearby areas can be populated again, while maintaining the genetic diversity of the original population.

More than 1,300 young salamanders hatched this spring in an adapted breeding infrastructure. The juveniles were grown in a protected environment to guarantee maximum survival, and this summer they were transferred to their new habitat where they hopefully will start a new population.

A four-week old Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) larva from the breeding program at the Instituut voor Natuur- en Bosonderzoek, Belgium. Photo: Johan Auwerx.

Save the dates for ATAG's 2019 Amphibian Management School!

Monday February 18 – Friday February 22, 2019

Hosted by the Detroit Zoo's National Amphibian Conservation Center in Royal Oak, Michigan, USA

The next Amphibian Management School (AMS) will be February 18 - 22, 2019 hosted by the Detroit Zoo in the USA. This hands-on learning experience focuses on the latest in basic husbandry techniques, exhibit design, support for regional conservation programs, and effective conservation messaging in a zoo or aquarium collection. Participants will learn not only about amphibian husbandry, but also how to connect with conservation projects, breeding program management, enrichment basics, amphibian health fundamentals, and more to improve amphibian management at their institutions and impact amphibians globally.

Under guidance of the Amphibian Taxon Advisory Group (ATAG), AMS provides knowledge about amphibians and skills for managing these sensitive species in captivity that are essential for anyone working directly with amphibians in a zoo, aquarium, conservation, or research settings. AMS is ideal for novice to moderate amphibian zoo keepers, animal health, research or education staff who need more training on handling and husbandry of amphibians, and representatives of nature centers and natural history museums or science centers with limited amphibian experience. The course includes field trip to look for wild mudpuppies!

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For budgeting purposes, course fees are US$600 (AZA individual members) or US$700 (non-AZA members) if registered by the Early bird date of November 15, 2018. Lodging will be approximately US$150/night, although room-sharing with other students is an option to reduce expenses.

Scholarship funding is available through the following competitive process:

US and Canada: Marcy Sieggreen Professional Development Scholarship

Covers Registration Fee only, not travel expenses. Deadline is November 15, 2018. Please contact Dr. Ruth Marcec via email directly at rmarcec@dzs.org, including "Marcy Sieggreen Professional Development Scholarship" in the email subject line. Separate course registration is required in addition to the scholarship application; the winner will be notified of the final award by December 5, 2018 and any registration fees paid will be refunded to the winner.

Course registration and payment information will be shared once finalized, but please budget now to send staff in 2019!