

Amphibian Decline and the Environment

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Abstract

There has been much public furor in the last few years over a possible global decline in amphibians. Numerous accounts of complete disappearance or drastic number reductions have appeared in newspapers, magazines, and science journals. Nobody has yet been able to prove the existence of a global reason for the decline. Numerous site specific causes have been identified, proving declines in certain areas, but they do not command the attention of a worldwide population loss. If there were such a decline, everyone agrees it would have incredible impact on all life on Earth. Not only would it affect the amphibian ecosystem, but something that can hurt a whole class of animals will inevitably affect other living things as well. In fact, some say a decline in amphibians may be foreshadowing greater declines in *all* species. In order to determine without a doubt what is occurring, more studies are needed;

long-term population studies to supplement what is known of amphibian dynamics; geographical studies of acidity or global warming over more than one habitat; comparisons of decline characteristics from one site to another; further study of the ecology surrounding amphibians, forested wetlands, ponds, streams, etc. Efforts are underway to carry out some of that work, but slowly.

Attention should not be diverted from these studies even though there is no proof of an extinction event. Amphibians are declining in some regions of the world, indicating some kind of change in their environment that is affecting them adversely. Though not much is known about these changes, the chance that they are caused by man should concern us. Saving the frogs and the salamanders is *not* the ultimate goal we should be reaching for. Amphibians are a small part of the biological diversity of our planet, and that diversity is slowly being eliminated. Amphibians should not be our first concern, the conservation of all wildlife and their habitats should be.