

PEOPLE AND NATURE THRIVING TOGETHER

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 2029



**HERP
CONSERVATION
GHANA**

www.herpconservationghana.org



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Herp Conservation Ghana (Herp Ghana) is a leading non-profit organisation dedicated to conserving Ghana's priority yet overlooked amphibian and reptile species, and their habitats. We have over a decade of experience in translating scientific expertise into conservation impact to save critically endangered and endemic species, in collaboration with communities.

Operating in the Volta-Togo Highlands and other key biodiversity areas in Ghana, Herp Conservation Ghana is recognised for pioneering research and a unique community-centred approach to conservation. We have discovered several frog species, and mapped critical habitats for critically endangered amphibians, contributing to global amphibian conservation.

Our community engagement has impacted over 20,000 people, and through our collaborative approach with communities and local government, we established the Onepone Endangered Species Refuge. This 5,270 ha reserve, which incorporates an area designated as key frog habitat of an IUCN category 1a reserve, as well as sustainable use zones, protects endemic frog species, such as the Togo Slippery Frog, along with hundreds of other threatened plant and animal species. To ensure the sustainability of this reserve, and increase nature-friendly livelihood opportunities, we developed the first canopy walkway in the Volta Region, which has grown ecotourism in this corner of Ghana, attracting over 48,000 tourists since its opening in 2022. Through these tourism initiatives and other agroforestry and tree-planting activities, we have strengthened communities economically while promoting conservation. We have also mentored emerging conservation NGOs, and through our Ecology Field School, we have trained over 30 young ecologists in conservation and field techniques, with an emphasis on amphibians and reptiles.

As threats to Ghana's ecosystems, particularly to amphibians and reptiles intensify, we need to escalate our impact significantly - both in areas where we already operate and where we are not yet present.

Our ambitious strategic plan builds on our key strengths in amphibian research and our community-centred approach that has enabled us to gain the trust and confidence of communities, local government, donors and other key stakeholders. We aim to leverage these strengths together with the increasing support for locally-led conservation, to amplify amphibian and reptile conservation impact in Ghana.

To do this, we will focus on four strategic goals:

- More communities living in Ghana's key amphibian and reptile habitats integrate conservation in their decision-making: Foster conservation as a daily practice among local communities through education, conservation behaviour change programs, and governance structures.
- Protection of Ghana's endemic and endangered amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats: Expand community-managed protected areas and restore degraded lands, including through tree planting and reducing bycatch of amphibians.
- Pro-biodiversity livelihoods become the norm: Develop nature-friendly economic opportunities through ecotourism, agroforestry, and restoration jobs, targeting the reduction of illegal activities.
- Herp Conservation Ghana is a well-structured and well-resourced organisation: Strengthen Herp Conservation Ghana's internal capacity by raising \$5 million, growing the team, and enhancing leadership development and partnerships.

**BY 2029 OUR
OVERALL
VISION IS TO
SEE MORE
PEOPLE LIVING
PEACEFULLY
AND
PROSPEROUSLY
WITH WILDLIFE
IN GHANA'S
THRIVING
ECOSYSTEMS.**



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER/CEO

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

Years ago, my journey began with a simple yet urgent concern: amphibians across Ghana were vanishing, and no in-country resources existed to stop it. Watching this unfold, I knew I couldn't just stand by. So, I decided to take action.

The path from that decision to where we stand today was anything but easy—countless late nights, moments of doubt, and plenty of setbacks tested our resolve. But it's also a path that has brought incredible, often unexpected, rewards.

Looking back now, I'm both joyful and amazed at how far we've come. What started as a solo mission to protect amphibians has grown into something much larger, powered by selfless individuals who joined the cause. Together, we've created a movement that's reshaping how people view and protect Ghana's unique wildlife. We're seeing the impact across communities. Frog consumption, once a beloved delicacy, is decreasing. Communities are rallying behind amphibian conservation, new protected areas are being established, habitats are being restored, and ecotourism is providing new livelihoods for communities, reducing their dependence on livelihoods that destroyed amphibians and their habitats.

These achievements are remarkable, and our peers and mentors often describe them as significant milestones. But they've come at a cost. Herp Conservation Ghana's small, passionate team has been stretched, driven by our joint determination to make a difference for amphibians and the communities we serve. To create a truly resilient organisation, we need a clear strategy, and in this, we're all in agreement—our team, partners, and supporters alike. I'm thrilled to announce that we've finally developed Herp Conservation Ghana's first-ever

strategic plan.

This plan is a roadmap for the next five years, detailing where we're headed, how we'll get there, and what it will take to make it happen.

Our strategy focuses on four core goals:

- (1) Empowering Communities in Conservation
- (2) Safeguarding Endangered Species and Habitats
- (3) Promoting Pro-Biodiversity Livelihoods
- (4) Building a Resilient Organization.

Together, these goals will drive us to significantly expand our work to enhance species protection and deepen community engagement. We envision a Ghana where people live harmoniously with wildlife, within healthy and vibrant ecosystems.

On behalf of the entire Herp Conservation Ghana team, thank you for standing with us. With your continued support, we'll make this vision a reality, preserving Ghana's incredible biodiversity for generations to come.

Warmest regards,

Caleb

Caleb Ofori-Boateng
Founder





ABOUT HERP GHANA

Herp Conservation Ghana is a non-governmental, not-for-profit conservation organisation dedicated to protecting endangered amphibian and reptile species and their habitats.

Our roots are in science, specifically discovering, documenting and monitoring endangered amphibian and reptile species. This deep understanding of amphibians and reptiles, and the threats they face, led us to share our passion for the conservation of these species with local communities - partnering with them and local governments to implement on-the-ground conservation action. The wellbeing of local communities who share natural resources with wildlife is essential for the long-term survival of

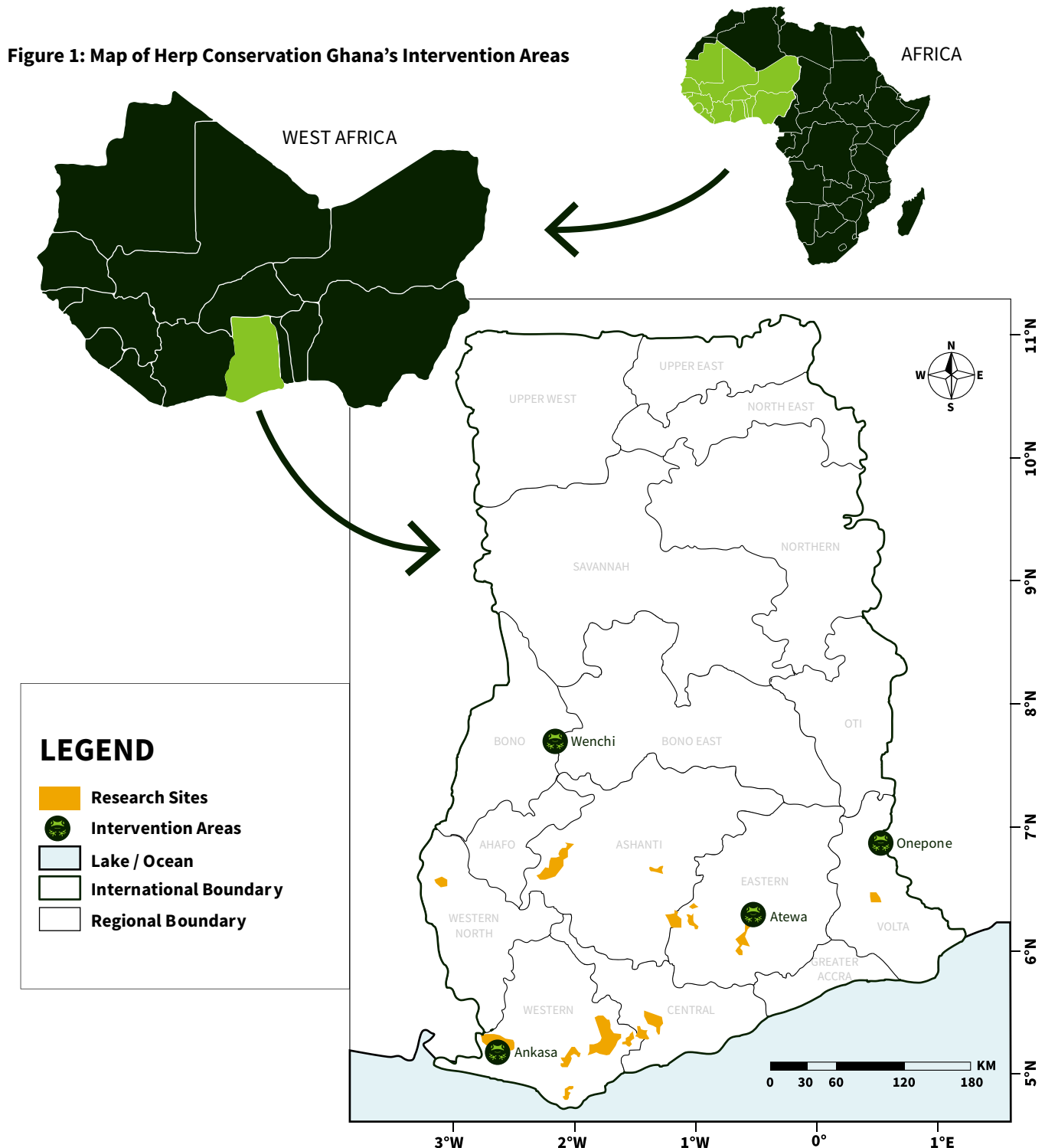
these species. We collaborate with communities to find ways to improve lives and livelihoods while protecting and restoring key amphibian and reptile habitats.

We are the first organisation to lead amphibian and reptile conservation in Ghana, with a strong focus on protecting endangered frog species. As a key player in this field across West Africa, we are at the forefront of efforts to preserve these vulnerable species.

WHERE WE WORK

We operate mainly in the Volta-Togo Highlands situated in the south-eastern part of Ghana (along the Ghana-Togo border), where we collaborate with seven communities to manage, restore, and protect 5,720 ha of a conservation area known as the Onepone Endangered Species Refuge.

We also undertake amphibian and reptile-focused research and projects in other sites including key Protected Areas and Reserves in Ghana (Wenchi municipality, Atewa Range Forest, and the Ankasa Conservation Area).



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Herp Conservation Ghana has been a key initiator and collaborator in the field of amphibian and reptile conservation across Ghana championing and advancing district, municipal and community-led initiatives to protect these species and their critical habitats. Our core expertise in herpetology research and locally-led biodiversity conservation has resulted in the following major achievements:

DISCOVERY/REDISCOVERY OF ENDEMIC AMPHIBIAN SPECIES IN GHANA

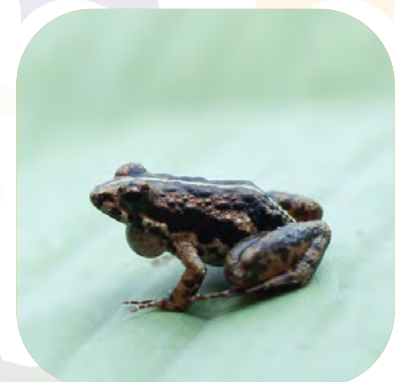
Our pioneering amphibian research in Ghana led to the discovery of four new frog species: Atewa Slippery Frog (*Conraua sagyimase*), Afia Birago's puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus afiibirago*), Intermediate Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus intermedius*) and Tanoé Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus tanoeensis*). We also contributed to the rediscovery of the Togo Slippery Frog (*Conraua derooi*), a species assumed to be extinct after not being seen for 40 years.

Together with discovering new frog species, we have identified new populations of the critically endangered Intermediate Puddle Frog in the Ankasa Conservation Area, where they were previously not known to occur and begun engaging with local communities for their protection.

Our pioneering amphibian research has drawn the attention of academic and funding partners. Through these collaborations and with the advent of improved genetic testing, we have made several more discoveries and are currently working on their formal scientific descriptions.

BROUGHT BACK TOGO SLIPPERY FROG FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION

The highly endemic Togo Slippery frog is among the top 100 most Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) amphibians. This species only exists in the Volta-Togo Highlands, where we created the Onepone Endangered Species Refuge. Through habitat restoration activities, such as tree planting, campaigns to reduce human consumption and wildlife patrolling in the conservation area, we have successfully brought back the Togo Slippery frog from the brink of extinction. These activities have resulted in increased numbers of the Togo Slippery frog from just over 100 in 2013, to over 830 individuals in the last count. We have therefore, successfully saved and increased the profile of these little known amphibians in Ghana.



CREATION OF A LOCALLY-LED CONSERVATION AREA IN GHANA

Recognising the need to protect these highly endemic and endangered amphibian species, we moved beyond research to create the Onepone Endangered Species Refuge (Onepone), in partnership with local communities and the local government. In 2020, four years after the reserve was established, we expanded this district-level reserve to 5,270 ha (17X its initial size). 863 ha of the reserve is designated as key frog habitat of an IUCN category 1a reserve while other areas are designated as sustainable use zones.

We are the first Ghanaian NGO to have successfully collaborated with communities (landowners) and local government lawmakers to create a Conservation Area with this designation. This protected area contributes not only to protecting the Togo Slippery frogs but also safeguarding other frog species along with hundreds of other species including plants, pangolins, vultures, and butterflies most of which are threatened.



“Communities are now aware of the importance of protecting this area. They are seeing the progress and benefits of having a protected area.”

**KWESI ELI ADJATO,
AMEDZOFÉ
COMMUNITY**

“The community saw the success of the existing protected area, and they wanted to broaden that success, bringing more communities onboard”

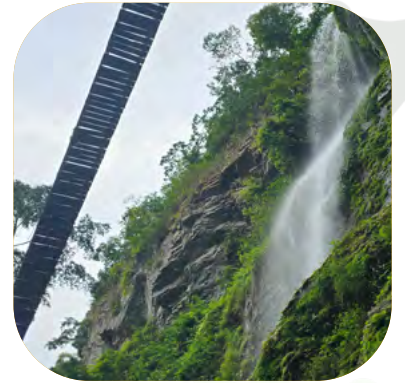
**ANTOINE MARCHAL,
RAINFOREST TRUST**

STRONG LOCAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND OWNERSHIP OF CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Being embedded in the local communities, we developed a novel conservation outreach approach that integrates conservation into the religious belief system of the local people. Known as “Conservation Evangelism”, this approach has helped us gain the trust and support of communities which is essential for the continuity and sustainability of our conservation projects. Building on this trust, together with the natural assets available (mountain, forest and waterfall), we successfully constructed a



canopy walkway to promote local eco-tourism (which has attracted over 48,000 visitors since its opening in 2022), diversify income, and incentivise community-led conservation actions within the Volta-Togo Highlands landscape.



A NOTE ON CONSERVATION EVANGELISM

Historically, local taboos, customs and practices (e.g. totem beliefs, sacred groves) have been developed and used in Ghana to protect important natural areas. Today, many of the traditional practices that safeguarded these areas have been eroded. However, religion is still important in Ghanaian society, dominated by Christianity (71% of the population) followed by Islam (20% of the population) and indigenous religious beliefs (3% of the population). Using religion and historic traditional practices as an entry point, Conservation Evangelism was developed by Herp Conservation Ghana as a conservation education approach that integrates and leverages people’s belief systems to strengthen conservation knowledge and harmonise faith with the imperative to protect and steward the environment. For instance, it integrates bible scripture or Quran verses to propagate conservation awareness in churches or mosques to encourage congregants to embrace environmental protection in alignment with their belief system. Since the adoption of this approach, we have strengthened conservation awareness of over 20,000 people in our project landscapes and empowered 135 volunteers who act as behaviour change champions. Thanks to this approach, the initial 40 ha land for the creation of Onepone was donated by one of the churches in the project landscape.

A LEADING AMPHIBIAN CONSERVATION ORGANISATION IN WEST AFRICA, EMPOWERING FUTURE CONSERVATIONISTS

With our technical expertise in amphibian conservation, we have single-handedly raised the profile of amphibian conservation in Ghana and inspired the emergence of new NGOs. Over the years, we have educated and engaged a wide range of stakeholder groups (government, traditional authorities, communities, donor and academic institutions) at local, national and international levels. Specifically, we designed and led an intensive scientific training course known as the Ecology Field School to capacitate students and graduates in hands-on field experience in ecology and conservation. The over 30 alumni of the program have often progressed to lead their own conservation initiatives, teach at universities, or pursue advanced degrees.

We have also mentored several organisations, including Save Ghana's Frogs, THRESCOAL and Herp-Cameroon. We are emerging as the leading, or go-to amphibian conservation organisation in Ghana and are highly recommended by our partners.



OUR CONTEXT

Ghana falls within the Upper Guinean Biodiversity Hotspot of West Africa and is endowed with abundant biological resources such as tropical highland forests, savannahs, numerous coastal wetlands and a great variety of endemic species. Current records indicate that there could be as many as 221 species of amphibians and reptiles, 728 species of birds and 225 mammalian species. Three species of frogs, one lizard species and twenty-three species of butterflies have been reported to be endemic.

Despite its ecological richness and diversity, Ghana's ecosystems and biodiversity are under tremendous threat. Increasing rural populations and a struggling economy coupled with a lack of conservation awareness has led to agricultural expansion and a rise in extractive illegal activities such as mining, logging and bushmeat hunting. Highly endemic amphibians and reptiles in particular are threatened by habitat loss and degradation, global climate change, disease and parasitism, and the introduction of invasive species. Consumption is another major threat as frogs are a delicacy for some communities in Ghana (70% of the inhabitants of the communities in the Volta-Togo highlands are recorded to have eaten frog species).

Since the 1960s, protected areas and nature reserves have been adopted as viable tools for securing and conserving the environment. These areas serve as "sanctuaries" for threatened species, provide ecotourism opportunities, and enable sustainable management of natural resources. Ghana's Wild Animals Preservation Act of 1961 (Act 43) provided the legislative authority and guidelines for conserving wildlife and establishing protected areas (PAs) in Ghana. Until the 1990s, wildlife conservation was centralised – managed by a single centralised state institution, the Wildlife Department (now the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission). However, the Division has always been severely under-resourced and struggles to perform its functions effectively. Also, while approximately 90 percent of the land and natural resources belong to the people, the economic management rights

to the land's resources have constitutionally been vested with the State.

This discrepancy between natural resource management and land rights, coupled with an under-resourced Wildlife Division, led to management inefficiencies and the exclusion of other relevant stakeholders including local communities in sustainable resource management decisions. Farmers and forest users saw no incentives to manage their natural resources sustainably and often participated in illegal activities, such as logging, mining, hunting and wildlife trade.

To improve the management of natural resources, the government embarked on a renewed approach to biodiversity conservation with major policy shifts and legal reforms including:

- The Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462) that allows the decentralisation of wildlife management responsibility outside of reserves to the local government authorities [Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs)] and enables them to establish conservation areas and enact bye-laws.
- The Forest and Wildlife Policy (FWP) of 1994 and 2012 and the Collaborative Resource Management (CRM) Policy of 2000, all aiming to improve natural resource management and the perpetual flow of optimum benefits to all segments of society. The CRM policy specifically

supports the development of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) as a co-management approach for ensuring inclusive decision-making and active local participation in the management and fair distribution of benefits.

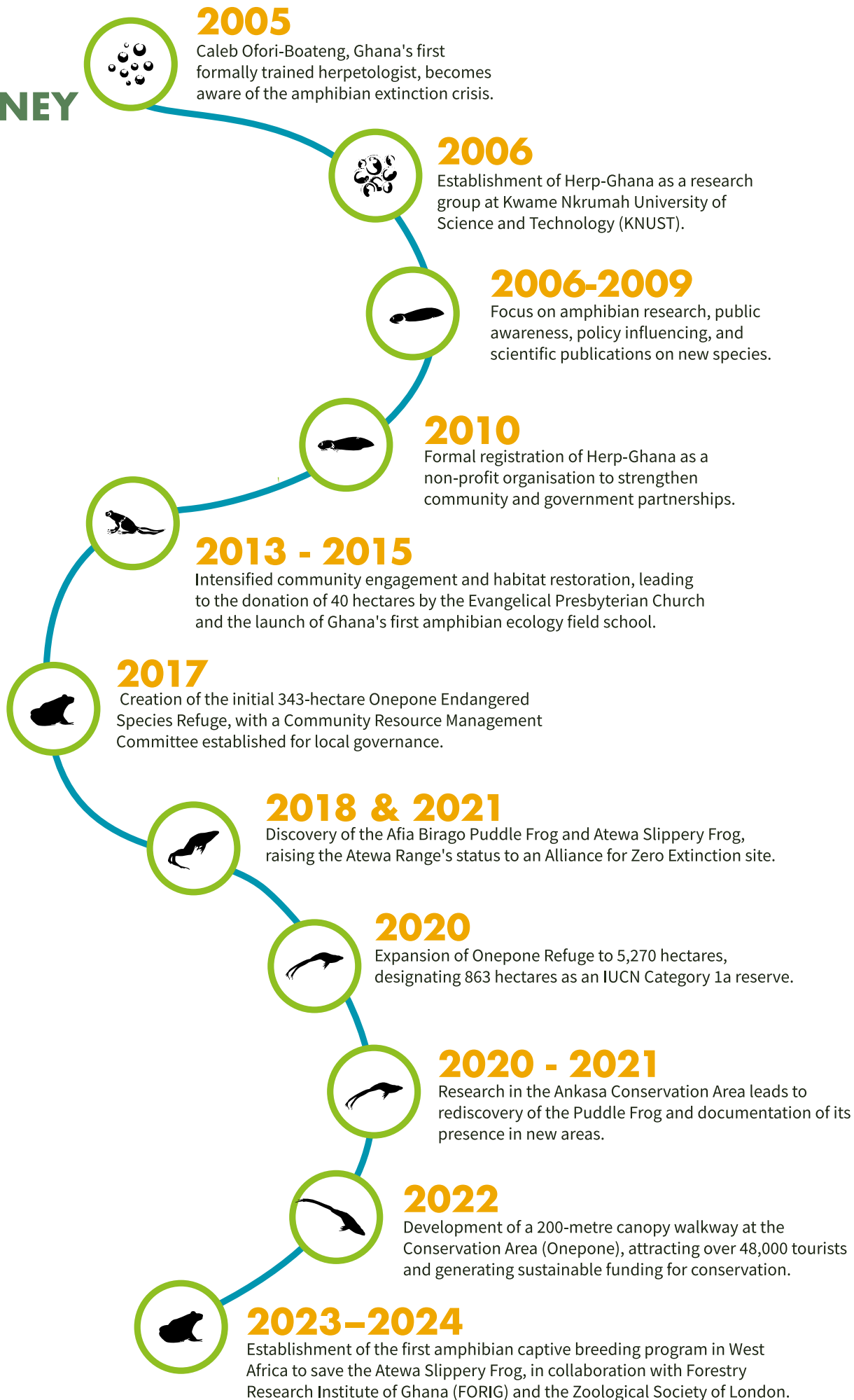
- Community Resource Management Area (CREMA), is a form of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) mechanism in Ghana. It allows the state to devolve natural resources management authority and rights to local communities (including landowners and land users) to sustainably manage wildlife and other resources on their land for socio-cultural, economic and ecological benefits. It is applied as a decentralised and participatory land-use planning and decision-making tool for the sustainable management of the natural resources of a community landscape, often serving as a buffer for protected areas. It confers management and enforcement responsibilities to the communities and allows them to set up their own Resource Governance Structures (constitution and bylaws, resource management committees, resource monitoring teams, management plans, benefit sharing and distribution mechanisms, etc.) and impose sanctions on offenders.
- Most recently, the Wildlife Resources Management Act, 2023 (Act 1115), provides a consolidated and revised version of existing laws related to wildlife and protected areas. This law now gives full legal backing for CREMAs and other forms of community-based resource management and supports the implementation of international conventions on wildlife to which Ghana is a signatory.

The cumulative impact of these policies and enabling frameworks has favoured decentralised resource management, active participation of varying stakeholder groups – civil society groups (including communities, NGOs), private individuals and institutions in protected area management and enabled more protected areas at community, district or municipal levels to be created.



THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF THESE POLICIES AND ENABLING FRAMEWORKS HAS FAVOURED DECENTRALISED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF VARYING STAKEHOLDER GROUPS – CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS (INCLUDING COMMUNITIES, NGOS), PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS IN PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT AND ENABLED MORE PROTECTED AREAS AT COMMUNITY, DISTRICT OR MUNICIPAL LEVELS TO BE CREATED.

OUR JOURNEY



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS



OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the many challenges to biodiversity conservation in Ghana, we are also working in a rapidly evolving context and becoming more solution-oriented. We see a growing interest by national government and international bodies in developing and aligning policies that support community-based natural resource management and local socio-economic development.

INCREASING SUPPORTIVE POLICIES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Ghana has a comprehensive set of policies and regulations guiding the sustainable use and management of its natural resources including the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016 - 2030), the CRM policy and the 2023 Wildlife Resources Management Act, an ongoing tree tenure reform (that aims to transfer tree tenure rights to farmers and landowners) and the Ghana Forest Plantation Strategy (2016 -2040) that aims to protect and restore forests, watersheds and wildlife habitats.

These policies, together with local interest in conserving natural resources, present a great opportunity for Herp Conservation Ghana to create CREMAs around the Onepone reserve and to create new community-managed protected areas in other regions of Ghana.

INCREASING RECOGNITION AND FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY-MANAGED PROTECTED AREAS AND LANDSCAPE-LEVEL CONSERVATION

The international 30x30 initiative (global biodiversity target) has led to increased recognition and support for community-protected areas. There is also growing funding commitment from multilaterals, bilateral donor countries, and international NGOs for locally-led restoration and community-managed forests in Ghana.

Given our strengths in supporting communities, developing locally-led conservation areas, and field actions, this increasing recognition and support for our work provides further opportunities to scale impact.

“A lot of donors prefer to focus on local NGOs rather than BINGOs...there is also more and more money that is being put into capacity building and institutional strengthening”

“When it comes to creating new protected areas, it’s something that is attracting funding” - Antoine Marchal, Rainforest Trust

GROWING DEMAND AND NEED FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Herp Conservation Ghana’s leading research and success in Onepone has resulted in increased demand for our expertise from Protected Area (PA) managers (e.g in Ankasa Conservation Area). These managers are interested in how to better assess and provide intact habitats for endangered species, including amphibians and reptiles. Additionally, several consortiums have reached out to partner with Herp Conservation Ghana as there is now increased funding for collaborative landscape-level work.

THREATS

We have achieved success to date by addressing complex threats and challenges with innovation and passion. While we continue to embrace a positive mindset, we also acknowledge the need to understand threats such as limited funding sources, weak implementation of policies and a struggling economy so that we can continue to succeed in our conservation initiatives.

LIMITED FUNDING FOR AMPHIBIAN CONSERVATION IN GHANA

Amphibian conservation across the world receives far less funding and attention than other more charismatic species, such as lions and elephants. The funding that is available for amphibian conservation is often research-oriented, and provides very little, if any, support for core conservation activities and organisational overheads. Our funding prospects are further hampered by the fact that Ghana is often overlooked as a key geography for amphibian conservation. Due to the historical lack of local herpetologists, amphibian research in Ghana has been slow to emerge, resulting in insufficient data to highlight the country's importance in the global fight to safeguard these species. This lack of data leads to amphibian-interested donors directing their pool of resources elsewhere.

"There are very few donors that donate to amphibian conservation - those that do, don't really look at Ghana because Ghana is not on the amphibian map."
- Pria Gosh, Synchronicity Earth

COMPETING INTERESTS FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

Increasing livelihood demands from a growing population continue to drive agricultural expansion and extractive activities such as logging and mining, putting pressure on fragile ecosystems and biodiversity. In addition, there is unsustainable harvesting and consumption of amphibians and a lack of awareness of biodiversity conservation measures in areas where Herp Conservation Ghana does not operate. We have to manage both the economic juggernaut as well as the communities' livelihood needs in a delicate balance to conserve the remnants of the Upper Guinean Forest and their amphibians. We need to remove existing structural, systemic and mental barriers to incentivize conservation action and ensure that protected areas remain protected.

WEAK GOVERNANCE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

We work in a context of frequent changes in local government officials, creating weak institutional contact and delays in the by-law enactment process. These delays risk our work not being integrated into local government Medium Term Development Plans (MTDPs) when needed. We also face the challenge of navigating complex land tenure scenarios (stool, individual, family & clan lands). If any member of the family that holds a land title changes their mind about setting aside land for conservation, we have to go back to square one and renegotiate the terms with the community. While Ghana has good policies and laws, weak implementation, lack of enforcement and political commitment mean that there is a wide gap between policy and practice. The enactment of bye-laws for the Onepone reserve is a huge policy step but needs enforcement to keep it well managed.

"The implementation of public policies in Ghana has been identified as the critical challenge facing the country"

STRENGTHS

Herp Conservation Ghana has a young, visionary and charismatic leader and a small dedicated team that is nimble, flexible and able to dynamically adapt to situations, take risks and leverage opportunities. Our strength also lies in our expertise in amphibian conservation and unique ability to build trust and work with communities and local authorities to conserve amphibians.

STRONG LEADERSHIP

Our leader has inspired communities and donors to support amphibian and reptile conservation in Ghana. Caleb has not only been able to source funding to support Herp Conservation Ghana's work but he has single-handedly put Ghanaian amphibian conservation on the world map.

"I've been so impressed with Caleb's leadership skills and his ability to inspire other people about species that have been historically overlooked"

- Pria Gosh, Synchronicity Earth

POSITIVE TEAM CULTURE

We are a dedicated and qualified team fueled by passion, professionalism and the need to create impact. Our team spirit and cohesion allows for open communication and collective decision making.

"One of the things that stands out with Herp Conservation Ghana is the sense of community. Once you work with them, it becomes like family. It's very enjoyable. It's very nice. Everyone looks out for each other. And it's one of the things that I'll never forget with Herp Conservation Ghana, a sense of community - a bond and a love and a passion. It's amazing."

- Michael Gyapong Akrasi, Herp Conservation Ghana (Former Staff)

TRACK RECORD AND IMPACT

As highlighted in our journey, we have built a solid track record, and have already contributed significantly to amphibian conservation in Ghana:

- Four amphibian species new to science discovered and described
- Rediscovery of the Togo Slippery Frog
- Over 30 young amphibian conservationists trained

With our specialised knowledge of critically endangered species, and our unique community-centred approach, we have inspired communities to protect amphibians and reptiles in areas where we work. 135 community members have joined us voluntarily to protect these species and the habitats they depend on. We have shifted communities' perceptions of amphibians, leading to a reduction in the consumption of frogs and a desire to implement community-managed protected areas.

"They have an impact and presence particularly in the world of amphibian conservation that is disproportionate to their size."

- Pria Gosh, Synchronicity Earth

“It is an NGO that has been built from research... the good thing about Herp Conservation Ghana is that they are good with the research and the species conservation aspect” - Antoine Marchal, Rainforest Trust

UNIQUE APPROACH

At Herp Conservation Ghana, we co-design and implement interventions with communities. Our strong understanding of the local dynamics enables this co-creation. We have built trusting relationships with communities by actively engaging and listening to them, getting their buy-in and responding to those needs in a way that supports livelihoods and conservation. Importantly, we connect with the communities on an emotional and intellectual level – always looking for ways to improve the wellbeing of community members.

“Communities start advocating for conservation themselves - volunteers, behaviour change champions - they carry out work on behalf of Herp Conservation Ghana.”

- Michael Gyapong Akrasi, Herp Conservation Ghana (Former Staff)

“Caleb gave us goggles to see better” - community member

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

At Herp Conservation Ghana, we believe in collaboration. Over the years, we have developed several strong partnerships in and outside Ghana. We are committed to engaging with this diverse group of partners (traditional authorities, community groups/individuals, government and funders) each with different interests and priorities.

Through collaboration and co-creation, we have successfully implemented large projects and achieved impacts such as scaling district-managed and community-led conservation areas and constructing the first canopy walkway in the Volta Region of Ghana.

We are consistently recommended by our partners to other emerging conservationists and conservation organisations as the “go-to” organisation for amphibian research and conservation. For example, we mentor and support the organisations, Save Ghana’s Frogs, THRESCOAL and Herp-Cameroon.



ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

Herp Conservation Ghana's organisational challenges stem from the lack of a shared, coherent and documented vision across the organisation. This contributes to our inability to access core funding to support administrative and institutional growth.

OPPORTUNISTIC AND PROJECT-DRIVEN APPROACH

Over the years, we have operated with a sense of urgency to reduce the extinction threats to amphibians but have not clearly articulated a strategy to guide our management and project decisions. We recognise the need to have a defined plan to guide our operations and overall organisational development, including fundraising. A clear strategy will reduce the tendency of opportunistically looking for donor-driven funding that is not aligned with our overall goals and targets.

"I think they have a good strategy for what they want to do at a site, but their overall strategy is somehow unsure. At the moment, [their strategy] comes from funding opportunities" - **Antoine Marchal, Rainforest Trust**

"Very important to make the institution stronger with some stronger succession planning, and also some long term strategic vision" - **Antoine Marchal, Rainforest Trust**

INSUFFICIENT CAPACITY LIMITING GROWTH AND IMPACT

We are a relatively small team driven to go to any lengths to create a positive impact. As such, our team members take on many responsibilities and are pulled in many directions. We need more role clarity and most staff need clearly articulated job descriptions. There is also an over-reliance and dependence on our leader and, therefore, a real need to develop the next level of leadership for our organisation.

Due to a lack of core and unrestricted funding, we are unable to grow our team and onboard a dedicated capacity for fundraising, human resource management, and communications, which are key support areas. We also need to be able to compensate the team fairly - salaries and benefits are insufficient.

POOR EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Despite our incredible work, our communications messaging and reach is limited, especially on social media and our website. We also need an external communication strategy and the relevant skills to support regular updates and well-coordinated information dissemination to all our relevant stakeholders.

**WELCOME TO
THE ONEPONE ENDANGERED SPECIES REFUGIUM**



YOUR VISIT HELP COMMUNITIES PROTECT WILDLIFE



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

THE PROBLEM WE AIM TO ADDRESS

Amphibians and reptiles in Ghana are being pushed to the brink of extinction because of habitat degradation and over-consumption (frogs are a local delicacy in some parts of Ghana). Increasing threats to the natural ecosystems from development and extractive industries as well as the struggling local economy have disrupted the balance and ability of local communities to live sustainably off their natural resources.

VISION

People living peacefully and prosperously with wildlife in Ghana's thriving ecosystems

MISSION

Collaborate with communities to protect amphibians and reptiles in Ghana

CORE PURPOSE

Conserve priority yet overlooked amphibian and reptile species in Ghana

VALUE PROPOSITION

Our strong track record in amphibian research, monitoring and conservation, combined with our unique, community-centred approach to conservation, has enabled us to gain the trust and confidence of communities, local government, donors and other key stakeholders. We are therefore in an important position to leverage the increasing recognition for locally-led conservation, and the need for local partnerships to amplify amphibian and reptile conservation impact in Ghana.



VALUES



We put people and communities first - we prioritise community wellbeing through conservation work.



We co-create, develop and implement solutions with the communities for the communities and the wildlife.



We are passionate about amphibians and reptiles and work to save these endemic, overlooked and threatened species.



We find solutions that work. We look for innovative and creative solutions that solve key problems.



We work collaboratively towards a common goal. We celebrate our individual strengths and know that we all play a unique role in achieving our purpose.



We respect and value freedom of expression.



We build trust through responsible actions with all our stakeholders - communities, supporters and partners.



**HERP
CONSERVATION
GHANA**

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Herp Conservation Ghana seeks to ensure that amphibians and reptiles in Ghana are no longer threatened. We do this by restoring and protecting amphibian and reptile habitats, strengthening community governance and building nature positive livelihoods.

KEY AREAS OF WORK

GOALS



Education & Awareness

- Conservation Evangelism
- School Programmes
- Community Exchange visits
- Conservation Festivals



Community governance systems

- Community code of conduct
- Resource management committees
- Community monitoring



Restoration & Protection of Habitats and Species

- Local Herpetology science
- Tree planting
- Community-managed conservation areas
- Captive breeding



Nature-friendly livelihoods

- Ecotourism
- Agroforestry
- Promote skills development

GOAL 1

More communities living in Ghana's key amphibian and reptile habitats integrate conservation in their decision-making

GOAL 2

Improved protection of Ghana's endemic and endangered amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats

GOAL 3

Pro-biodiversity livelihoods become the norm

By focusing on these key specialised areas of work, we believe that conservation will become a way of life for all local Ghanaian communities in the same way that it has for the local communities living around the Onepone reserve.

OUTCOMES

Local communities prioritise conservation in their day-to-day decision-making

Unsustainable, extractive activities (e.g. logging, hunting) have stopped and degraded habitats are becoming functional again

Communities living in and around amphibian and reptile habitats have diversified, sustainable livelihoods

MISSION

Communities protect amphibians and reptiles in Ghana

VISION

People living peacefully and prosperously with wildlife in Ghana's thriving ecosystems

KEY AREAS OF WORK



EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Herp Conservation Ghana believes that if communities are engaged in conservation issues in a way that is relatable and fun, then these communities will become passionate about conservation and will develop a pride for their local biodiversity. We have unique, local amphibian and reptile knowledge and scientific capabilities. We understand the threats to these species, and the dire consequences to ecosystems if these overlooked species are not protected. Through our Conservation Evangelism approach and other community outreach programmes, we will translate scientific knowledge and the urgency to preserve these species in a way that engages communities to drive conservation agendas from the ground up.



COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

Herp Conservation Ghana believes that robust, functional community governance systems are paramount to strengthening the communities' capacities and decision-making power towards reducing the threats to amphibians and reptiles. Through the establishment of Resource Management Committees, Community Rangers and a co-developed Conservation Code of Conduct, communities will support the monitoring and protection of species.





RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES

Natural habitats and ecosystems in Ghana need to be protected and restored to ensure the long-term survival of amphibian and reptile species and other wildlife species that share these habitats. With our unique herpetology expertise, we will identify priority areas for the establishment of community-managed protected areas. We will leverage our experience in developing and collaborating with government and communities to establish more community-managed protected areas in Ghana and implement restoration projects in degraded but critical areas for amphibians and reptiles.



NATURE FRIENDLY LIVELIHOODS

The limited economic opportunities for many Ghanaian communities makes extractive, and sometimes illegal activities the easiest, or only way to earn a living. We believe that providing more nature-friendly economic opportunities to communities that are developing a sense of pride for their biodiversity, together with supporting skills development in more sustainable livelihood options, will lead to reduced threats to amphibians and reptiles. By developing community-managed protected areas, partnering with ecotourism enterprises and implementing agroforestry initiatives, we will increase the opportunities for local people to engage in nature-friendly livelihoods.





GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND TARGETS

Goal 1

More communities living in Ghana's key amphibian and reptile habitats integrate conservation in their decision-making



Goal 2

Improved protection of Ghana's endemic and endangered amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats



Goal 3

Pro-biodiversity livelihoods become the norm



Goal 4

Herp Conservation Ghana is a well structured and well resourced organisation



OBJECTIVE 1: COMMUNITIES BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE AND PASSIONATE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES AND THE ECOSYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT THESE SPECIES

Through knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising events, local communities will come to understand the importance of amphibians and reptiles and will want to adopt behaviours that ensure the long-term survival of these species.

1. Develop a conservation-oriented school curriculum to be adopted in local schools surrounding amphibian and reptile habitats.
2. Share the passion for amphibians and reptiles through Herp Conservation Ghana's unique Conservation Evangelism approach and other outreach activities such as community exchange visits and local conservation festivals.
3. Develop a framework with key messaging for the Conservation Evangelism approach to facilitate the scaling of this method to other communities.
4. Develop a manual and a framework that provides the necessary support for Herp Conservation Ghana's community volunteers (Behaviour Change Champions) who help to instil a sense of pride in local biodiversity assets.
5. Address consumption of endangered amphibians and other wildlife species through conservation education programmes and promotion of best practices.

OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROTECTION OF SPECIES AND HABITATS

In each community where Herp Conservation Ghana works:

1. Establish a working group that will draft a conservation code of conduct (that defines actions that are allowed or prohibited on their lands) approved by the community.
2. Support local governance structures to implement this code of conduct, and identify ways in which positive behaviour change can be encouraged or incentivised, e.g. through priority access to green jobs or skills development.
3. Establish Resource Management Committees and strengthen their capacities to lead community conservation decisions and agendas, including the promotion of traditional ways of living in harmony with nature.
4. Through knowledge-sharing events, communities, especially the youth, are aware of their rights and responsibilities concerning the management of natural resources.

YEAR 1 AND 2 TARGETS

- Behaviour change programmes are operational across all of Herp Conservation Ghana's areas of operation
- Curriculum for conservation education in schools developed
- Conservation Evangelism guide developed
- Communications strategy for outreach established
- Conservation Festival Launched in 2026
- By year 2, a community code of conduct is established in all of Herp Conservation Ghana's areas of operation

GOAL 1: MORE COMMUNITIES LIVING IN GHANA'S KEY AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE HABITATS INTEGRATE CONSERVATION IN THEIR DECISION-MAKING

Change: Local communities living in key amphibian and reptile habitats prioritise conservation in their day-to-day decision-making



GOAL 2: IMPROVED PROTECTION OF GHANA'S ENDEMIC AND ENDANGERED AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES, AND THEIR HABITATS

Change:

Unsustainable, extractive activities (e.g. logging, hunting) have reduced and degraded habitats are becoming functional again

OBJECTIVE 1: REDUCE FRAGMENTATION AND RESTORE KEY AREAS OF NATURAL AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE HABITAT IN GHANA

Through rigorous science and spatial mapping, identify priority areas for protection and restoration.

1. Collaborate with communities and local governments in priority areas to establish private and community-managed protected areas.
2. Establish CREMAs around the Onepone reserve to serve as a buffer or sustainable use zones.
3. Where habitats have been degraded, implement restoration projects (e.g. tree planting and agroforestry) to improve the integrity and connectivity of amphibian and reptile habitats.
4. Year 1 and 2 Targets:
5. 160 ha incorporated into restoration through the planting of 200,000 trees by the end of 2025
6. Onepone expanded to 9000 ha of which 1000 ha is designated as CREMAs (3 in total), serving as a buffer
7. Two private reserves with CREMAs established in the Atewa landscape by 2029

OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCE THE RISK OF ENDANGERED AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES BEING CAUGHT AS BYCATCH BY LOCAL FISHERS.

1. Conduct baseline surveys to understand the current state of bycatch of key species.
2. Use community engagement opportunities to share ways in which communities can reduce the level of bycatch without compromising their livelihoods.
3. Partner with communities and use local governance structures to implement community monitoring of bycatch.
4. Research and innovate novel ideas to reduce bycatch in the first place.

YEAR 1 AND 2 TARGETS

- By year one, amphibian and reptile by-catch baselines are established - threat is clearly understood.
- By year two, communities have increased their reporting of by-catch
- All the fishing communities in the Togo-Volta region have been made aware of how to reduce by-catch (increase release) and why it is important

OBJECTIVE 3: INFLUENCE BETTER ENFORCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS

1. Ensure target communities and local governance groups are aware of current environmental protection laws.
2. Implement a Community Rangers or Wildlife Guardian programme to support the monitoring and protection of species. These wildlife monitors will establish relationships and work collaboratively with law enforcement authorities.

OBJECTIVE 4: SAFEGUARD HIGHLY ENDEMIC AND CRITICALLY ENDANGERED AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE SPECIES IN SEVERELY THREATENED LANDSCAPES.

For highly endemic species, where their habitats are severely threatened, for example, from mining activities:

1. Establish and implement captive breeding of these species at our captive breeding site in Kumasi.
2. Design and implement a threat monitoring system - ensure local rangers are trained and equipped to use the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) so that illegal activities can be recorded and monitored in real-time. Also, integrate our on-the-ground reporting with the Global Forest Watch platform to better monitor deforestation threats.
3. Through rigorous research and partnerships, identify suitable release sites (near their original range) where animals bred in captivity are used to establish wild populations once the threat to their survival has reduced.
4. Release frogs bred in captivity into identified suitable sites by 2029.

YEAR 1 AND 2 TARGETS

- Train five people as captive breeding specialists
- Establish a threat monitoring system
- Establish a priority species list for Ghana's amphibians and reptiles



GOAL 3: PRO-BIODIVERSITY LIVELIHOODS BECOME THE NORM

Change: Communities living in and around amphibian and reptile habitats no longer rely on illegal activities for livelihoods - livelihoods are diversified and sustainable, and land use for conservation becomes economically viable.

OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

1. Establish and diversify ecotourism opportunities (where feasible) in the community-managed protected areas in which Herp Conservation Ghana is involved.
2. Implement and promote restoration activities and jobs (e.g. tree nurseries and tree planting).
3. Partner with organisations that implement agroforestry and other sustainable farming techniques.
4. Ensure land owners understand the benefits of the tree tenure policy and other similar policies that promote sustainable natural resource management.
5. Partner with ecotourism entities to promote and ensure ecotourism remains a reliable, viable land-use option and sustainable source of income for communities.

TARGETS

- One new ecotourism venture implemented per year
- At least 50 people employed in restoration activities
- At least 25 people employed in other conservation-related jobs
- Complete a small-scale alternative livelihood pilot project

OBJECTIVE 2: COMMUNITIES HAVE THE CAPACITY TO BENEFIT FROM ADDITIONAL LIVELIHOOD OPTIONS

1. Identify the skills community members desire but need to improve, and partner with relevant organisations who can help deliver relevant skills training and enterprise development.
2. Through ecotourism partnerships, help local businesses and communities develop the necessary skills to drive locally-led ecotourism initiatives.

YEAR 1 TARGETS

- Key partners for skills and vocational training identified

ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHENING & STRUCTURING

For the next five years, we commit to structuring the organisation to align with the organisational needs and long-term strategic goals. We will redefine our organogram and restructure the board functions to ensure the board is active and involved in strategic decisions and core actions such as fundraising. We will improve leadership development and team capacity through training programmes to enable the successful implementation of this strategic plan.

OBJECTIVE 1: RAISE \$5 MILLION OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

We aim to strengthen our fundraising capacity and financial stability by diversifying our funding sources. We will increase our funding portfolio to cover increasing project demands, and importantly, we will secure a greater proportion of unrestricted funding to support our organisational development, overhead and operational costs.

OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASE THE TEAM'S CAPACITY BY RECRUITING AND ONBOARDING NEW STAFF

We currently operate with an eight-member team with backgrounds in research and species monitoring, development policy and planning, project management, administration & accountancy. Within the next five years, we will recruit expertise in fundraising, communication, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) as new additions to support the implementation of our strategic plan.

OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE CAPACITY, SKILLS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE CURRENT TEAM

In addition to onboarding new staff, we will invest in the professional development of the existing staff through structured training and leadership development programmes. This training will focus on essential management functions such as HR Management, staff performance management and social impact (first aid training, team building, etc.)

GOAL 4: HERP CONSERVATION GHANA IS A WELL-STRUCTURED AND WELL-RESOURCED ORGANISATION

To pursue our strategic growth agenda, we acknowledge the crucial need to strengthen our core management functions and organisational development, including fundraising and developing the next level of leadership, increasing and strengthening our team and capabilities (e.g. creating new positions and improving existing skills sets), and fostering sustainable long-term partnerships.



OBJECTIVE 4: SYSTEMS ARE ESTABLISHED TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCIES, ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPACT.

Strengthening the organisation also requires developing and implementing robust and functional systems and procedures, including establishing HR protocols (such as hiring, onboarding and performance review protocols), accounting systems and upgrading relevant software.

OBJECTIVE 5: PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS ARE ESTABLISHED AND STRENGTHENED TO OPEN DOORS TO ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND OPPORTUNITIES TO AMPLIFY IMPACT.

We recognise the value of strong partnerships and plan to continue strengthening and increasing our partnership and network base. We will mobilise more support and partnerships, particularly in areas where our expertise is limited (e.g, business and enterprise development). We will invest in building additional strategic partnerships with multiple and diverse entities, including donors, government, the private sector, and communities (including traditional authorities to increase impact).

OBJECTIVE 6: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY IS DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED

We will develop a communication strategy to better communicate our impact, engage global stakeholders, and support our fundraising efforts.



FURTHER RESOURCES

- <https://www.edgeofexistence.org/species/species-category/amphibians/>
- Ghana Statistical Service (2021). Population and Housing Census
- Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation, 2016
- <https://gh.chm-cbd.net/biodiversity/status-ghanas-biodiversity>
- Musah, Yahaya & Attuquayefio, Daniel & Ofori, Benjamin & Owusu, Erasmus. (2015). Herpetofauna under threat: A study of Kogyae Strict Nature Reserve, Ghana. *International Journal of Biodiversity and Conservation*. 10.5897/IJBC2015.0909
- <https://whitleyaward.org/winners/critical-refuge-for-the-togo-slippery-frog/>
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- UICN/PACO (2010). Parks and reserves of Ghana: Management effectiveness assessment of protected areas. Ouagadougou, BF: UICN/PACO.
- World Bank. 2024. Ghana: CREMA Financial Sustainability Analysis Report. © World Bank
- Stuart et al (2005). Status and Trends of Amphibian Declines and Extinctions Worldwide
- N'goran Germain Kouamé, Caleb Ofori-Boateng & Mark-Oliver Rödel, (2007). A Rapid Survey of the Amphibians from the Atewa Range Forest Reserve, Eastern Region, Ghana.
- Caleb Ofori-Boateng, Evans Nkrumah, Asha Damoah & Philip Amankwaa, (2014). Saving the last viable population of the critically endangered Togo slippery frog (*Conraua derooi*) from extinction. CLP Project Report ID: F01158013
- Francis Osei-Gyan, Bernard Eshun, Susana Akwele Aryeetey & Angelina Osei Asor, (2021). Saving the critically endangered Intermediate puddle frog (*Phrynobatrachus intermedius*) from extinction. CLP project Report ID: 01119920
- Caleb Ofori-Boateng (2020). Critical Refuge for the Togo slippery frog. WFN Project Report.
- Francis Osei-Gyan, Charles Kojo Amponsah, and Caleb Ofori-Boateng, (2022). Conservation of Ghana's most Endangered Amphibians. Progress Report. SEF (G000463).
- The Good Natured. A podcast series from Conservation Optimism. Episode 1 with Caleb Ofori-Boateng.
- National Geographic Kids (NGK), Episode 20. The Big Interview with Caleb Ofori-Boateng.
- PPI. 2018. Preserving a unique ecosystem with exceptional biodiversity in the Togo-Volta Highlands. Project Document
- <https://www.rainforesttrust.org/our-impact/rainforest-news/voices-on-the-ground-a-pioneer-for-amphibians-in-africa/>
- <https://www.synchronicityearth.org/the-home-of-a-frog-orchestra-caleb-ofori-boateng/>
- <https://icfcanada.org/our-projects/projects/acg>
- <https://www.amphibians.org/news/herp-conservation-ghana-wins-amphibian-ark-conservation-grant/>



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Herp Conservation Ghana
P.O. Box KS-6980 Adum, Kumasi Ghana
+233 243 038 771
herpghana@gmail.com

www.herpconservationghana.org