

World first - rare froglets born at London Zoo in breakthrough for Critically Endangered species

Wednesday 14 October, 2026

Conservationists are celebrating the birth of 15 Afia Birago's puddle frogs at London Zoo - a major milestone in ZSL and Ghanaian partners' urgent efforts to save one of the world's rarest, smallest amphibians from extinction.

Currently no bigger than the tip of a pencil, the tiny froglets are the first of their species to be born under human care anywhere in the world, following the arrival of 20 adult frogs from Ghana last year as part of a collaborative conservation effort with Herp Conservation Ghana and the CSIR-Forestry Research Institute of Ghana.

ZSL Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians Ben Tapley said: "These 15 frogs are the first Afia Birago's puddle frogs born as part of our emergency conservation programme for the species. They may be tiny enough to sit on your fingertip, but their arrival represents a huge step forward for an amphibian facing an uncertain future."

Afia Birago's puddle frog (*Phrynobatrachus afiabirago*) was described as a new species to science just eight years ago, but it has since been found to survive in just two perennial pools in Ghana's Atewa Hills Forest Reserve. Sadly this habitat is being destroyed by mining. This meant conservationists faced an urgent race to protect the species, which exists nowhere else on Earth, before it was too late.

In September 2025, with the species facing imminent risk of extinction, an action plan was formed. With limited experience in amphibian care and challenges sourcing equipment locally, it was decided that 20 Critically Endangered Afia Birago's puddle frogs should be moved to ZSL's London Zoo where its world leading amphibian experts could learn as much as possible about these species to share with those leading efforts in Ghana, while time was left to do so.

ZSL Amphibian Keeper Unnar Aevansson said: "When the adult frogs arrived in London last year, almost nothing was known about them. Using our extensive experience caring for amphibians, our team have since learned so much more about these incredible frogs - developing the knowledge, techniques and breeding protocols needed to give them the best chance of survival.

"These 5mm long froglets are cause for celebration, but our work to save Afia Birago's puddle frog has only just begun: the wider goal now is for our partners to establish sustainable conservation populations in Ghana that can support their recovery in the wild - these births make that a real possibility."

Before the frogs' 2025 arrival, Unnar travelled to Ghana to help establish a conservation breeding facility in Kumasi - the first dedicated to amphibian conservation in West Africa - and gather the information about the frogs' natural environment the team needed to inform their new home at London Zoo.

Knowledge gained from the breeding programme is being shared with colleagues at the CSIR-Forestry Research Institute of Ghana's breeding centre in Kumasi, helping to inform their efforts to establish a conservation population in Ghana.

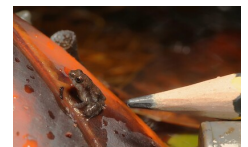
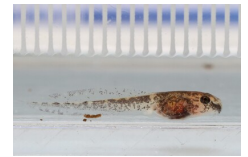
Meanwhile, ZSL EDGE Fellow Anthony Churcher, part of Herp Conservation Ghana, is investigating potential habitat on private land surrounding the Atewa Hills Forest Reserve that could support future releases of frogs bred in Ghana.

Award-winning Ghanaian conservationist and ZSL EDGE Regional Project Manager Caleb Ofori-Boateng, who helped describe Afia Birago's puddle frog to science and named it after his mother, said: "I named this frog after my mother so that her legacy would live on. Thanks to this breeding programme, it will. Her name will be linked to a species we saved, not one we lost."

Dr Kwame Antwi Oduro, Director of the CSIR-Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, said: "Protecting the species that live in Ghana's forests is central to our mandate. This collaboration with ZSL shows what science and partnership can achieve together, and it is building the skills and facilities Ghana needs to safeguard its own threatened wildlife."

Visitors to London Zoo can now see the conservation programme in action at *Secret Life of Reptiles and Amphibians*, where the frogs are being cared for by London Zoo's specialist amphibian team.

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Unnar added: "The global amphibian crisis means collaborative conservation work like this is crucial. These frogs are in themselves extraordinary animals, but they are also a reminder of how much wildlife we still stand to lose.

"Our visitors are already in awe of these miniature frogs, which weigh less than 1.75g each fully grown. By seeing them and learning about the work taking place here and in Ghana, they are directly supporting ZSL's work, making them part of the Afia Birago's puddle frog conservation story."

Be part of conservation action at London Zoo - book online now and enjoy a day out that makes a difference for wildlife around the world: <http://www.londonzoo.org/>

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