



For Immediate Release

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## **Rainforest Trust Funds Protection of Key Biodiversity Area, Leading to Identification of New Species of Glass Frog**

(Warrenton, VA)—Researchers from the Technical University of Loja [identified two new species of glass frogs](#) (*Centrolene elisae* and *C. marcoreyesi*) on a reserve in southeastern Ecuador. The [findings were published on August 20th, 2024](#) in PeerJ.

One of these species, the Marco Reyes' Glassfrog, (*Centrolene marcoreyesi*), was identified by researchers in the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) of Abra de Zamora in Ecuador within the San Francisco Reserve in the southern Andes of Ecuador. Rainforest Trust has been supporting partner [Nature and Culture International](#)—Ecuador since 2022 in the creation of the Abra de Zamora protected area, where populations of the newly identified *Centrolene marcoreyesi* were found.

Glass frogs are named for their translucent skin, which makes their internal organs visible, including their beating hearts. Recent research has shown that what was once thought to be a single species are actually several distinct species, each with differences in genetics, appearance, and vocalizations.

Although glass frogs are found across the tropics of Central and South America, recent studies have shown that the highest concentrations are in the Andean region, an area with incredibly rich biodiversity. These amphibians have very limited distribution, and threats to their habitat can wipe out entire populations or species.

The Abra de Zamora region of southeastern Ecuador is a hotspot for biodiversity and endemism. Lying between the Central and Eastern Cordilleras of the Andes in an unusual transition zone between four ecosystems. Dramatic changes in elevation bring forth exceptional richness of habitat and species, and rare amphibians, birds, and thousands of plant species are found here.

But this species-rich habitat is threatened by deforestation and degradation, primarily due to burning of páramo for cattle grazing, small-scale farming, and farming of introduced species of fish. The area's proximity to Loja, a major city of over 181,000 people, has opened it up to expanded activity by relocating urbanites or those who are selling their land, often due to the economic fallout of the pandemic. These activities are a particularly serious threat to restricted-range amphibian populations that could easily be wiped out entirely if any one of their small habitats is destroyed.



Rainforest Trust and Nature and Culture International–Ecuador, with support from the Mycorrhizal Fund purchased 1,662 acres of critical habitat within the northern buffer zone of the 360,000-acre Podocarpus National Park (PNP), with the ultimate goal of expanding the park by at least 4,814 acres. This area is especially important to global conservation as not only being within a Key Biodiversity Area but also being located in the core zone of the Podocarpus–El Condor Biosphere Reserve.

Speaking about the discovery of this new-to-science species, Dr. James C. Deutsch, CEO of Rainforest Trust, stated:

**“The discovery of this species highlights the critical importance of protected areas. Protected areas safeguard standing forests, but also the numerous species, both known and yet to be discovered that call these landscapes home.**

**“Rainforest Trust looks forward to continuing to work with Nature and Culture International, and to support scientific discovery and the conservation of threatened and endangered species.”**

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*Technical University of Loja research team included Daniela Franco-Mena, Ignacio De la Riva, Mateo A. Vega-Yáñez, Paul Székely, Luis Amador, Diego Batallas, Juan P. Reyes-Puig, Diego F. Cisneros-Heredia, Khristian Venegas-Valencia, Sandra P. Galeano, Jaime Culebras and Juan M. Guayasamin.*

To learn more about Rainforest Trust, visit [www.rainforesttrust.org](http://www.rainforesttrust.org).

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## **About Rainforest Trust**

Since 1988, Rainforest Trust has been working with partners to safeguard imperiled tropical habitats and endangered species by helping to establish protected areas in partnership with Indigenous and local organizations and communities. To date, Rainforest Trust has helped protect more than 52 million acres of vital habitat across Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. Rainforest Trust is a nonprofit organization that relies upon the generous support of the public to successfully implement its important conservation action. The organization is proud of earning a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator. Learn more about the work of Rainforest Trust by visiting [RainforestTrust.org](http://RainforestTrust.org), [X](#) (Twitter), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

