



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Frogs & Friends e.V.
Citizen Conservaton Foundation gGmbH
Managing Director: Björn Encke
 Phone: +49 30 34 64 97-660

Frogs & Friends e.V.
 Großbeerenstraße 84 · 10963 Berlin
 www.frogs-friends.org
Email: info@frogs-friends.org
Register number: VR 33841 B
 Charlottenburg Local Court
VAT ID No.: DE300020239
Board of Directors: PD Dr. Mark-Oliver Rödel

Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH
 Reichenberger Straße 88 · 10999 Berlin
 www.citizen-conservation.org
Email: info@citizen-conservation.org

Register number: HRB 239851 B
 Charlottenburg Local Court
Chairman of the Supervisory Board:
 Dr. Tim Schikora

Editors: Julia Bintl, Vanessa Dubberke,
 Björn Encke, Tina Nagorzanski, Johannes Penner,
 Heiko Werning
Translation: Ulrike Sterblich
Layout: Ines Bärwald
Image sources (if not listed individually):
 Julia Bintl, Vanessa Dubberke, Björn Encke,
 Tillmann Konrad, Tina Nagorzanski,
 Johannes Penner, Benny Trapp, Heiko Werning

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Björn Encke, Managing Director Frogs & Friends and Citizen Conservation

2025 will go down in history as a year of disruption. Whether Trump's inauguration on 20 January 2025 will one day be seen as the start of a devastating culture war and the decline of civilisation is, fortunately, still an open question. One thing is certain: this is not about a change in policy, it is about a change in the system, about the dismantling of open society. What is almost lost amidst the well-orchestrated barrage of attacks on almost every institution is the assault on the freedom of research and teaching.

Scientific rigour is being discredited as an ideology that runs counter to perceived truth, with such success that the discourse has reached an almost Macbeth-like level of 'Foul is fair, and fair is foul'. What is right and what is wrong is a matter of belief; the truth is nothing more than the lie of those who think differently. A people thus disenfranchised is a broken sovereign. And with a people deprived of its decision-making power, one can do as one pleases (the Russian people have had their fill of this for many generations now).

The trauma of two world wars has meant that we, the generations that followed, have been given two priceless gifts: the Declaration of Human Rights and the commitment to an open society. What followed were 80 years of peace and fruitful cooperation across much of Europe. This is a historic success story of the first order. And it is scarcely conceivable without the application of fundamental democratic principles. It is in their very nature that they must constantly defend themselves against attacks from groups seeking to expand their power at the expense of the general public. What we are currently witnessing, however,

is unprecedented and threatens our ability to respond to the fundamental challenges facing our civilisation.

We know that a life in which fundamental human rights are upheld will only be possible if we do our utmost to mitigate the environmental disasters looming over us and, at the same time, prepare ourselves as best we can for their consequences. It is our firmest conviction that this can only be achieved through cooperation. This idea also plays a central role in our work. It may sound melodramatic, and of course it is anthropocentric (which we wholeheartedly embrace), but it is primarily about our children. Whether they share our enthusiasm for Cameroonian Goliath Frogs or Vietnamese Bony-headed Toads, or whether they have absolutely no interest in this critterry and instead start families with Argentine tango dancers or Ukrainian lifeguards, it doesn't matter. It is solely about preserving the options for a life lived with human dignity. And for that, we need intact and functioning ecosystems. We don't have to love everything that crawls and flies within them, but we must know them in order to protect them.

'It's all a question of management.' With this sentence, Carl Jones summed up for me, over 20 years ago, the fundamental principle of species conservation – against the backdrop of the last bird of a species that had died in the hands of its conservationists. They had reacted too late, when they realised that this species was on the verge of extinction. In this case, 'reacting' meant they had removed the species from its habitat – which had become a death trap – too late to save it. I was at the lecture because I was filming a documentary for German TV about the Gerald Durrell Founda-

tion's Summer School for young conservationists from all over the world, and I was very happy to see him again on stage at the EAZA conference in Łódź, Poland, in September 2025 – with essentially the same message: It's all a question of management.

For our online wildlife platform, Wild at Home, we developed a prototype in 2025 that now has the potential to reach market maturity. This project, too, is all about collaboration. We have come to the conclusion that we will only be able to fulfil our social responsibilities in the field of coordinated conservation of species in human care if everyone who is able and willing to contribute is given the opportunity to do so. And since we know that the capacity of private wildlife keepers (at least in Europe and with regard to smaller species) is many times greater than that of zoos, it stands to reason that we should make use of this capacity. Wild at Home aims to contribute to this. In line with this understanding, we were able to attend a number of important meetings last year to engage in dialogue with, amongst others, representatives of the authorities, official veterinarians and EU officials. The reactions were overwhelmingly positive. Talking to one another helps, and it doesn't cost much – apart from the effort required to actually listen.

Citizen Conservation is all about collaboration by its very nature, yet we were able to make some particular strides in this area in 2025. This included the establishment of the Alpine Salamander Centre of Competence and a CC steering group in Italy, as well as the signing of a cooperation agreement with the Melinh Centre for Biodiversity in Vietnam. Alongside these more internationally focused collaborations, however,

we also wish to step up our efforts to protect native wildlife. Together with the Stiftung Artenschutz, we therefore applied for association funding to conduct a study comparing existing ex situ capacities for native species in zoos and private collections with conservation needs, and to use this as a basis for recommendations on the more efficient use of resources. Spoiler: The application was rejected (in early 2026, but before the editorial deadline). But we're not giving up. It's all a question of management.

Kind regards

Donation account Frogs & Friends e.V.

Bank: GLS Gemeinschaftsbank
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BIC: GENODEM1GLS

Donation account Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH

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BIC: GENODEM1GLS

ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

The number of members of Frogs & Friends (F&F) remained constant at 14 during the 2025 reporting year. The Annual General Meeting took place on 16 December 2025 in Berlin. There were no elections to the Executive Committee, so the Executive Committee remains in its current form, with Mark-Oliver 'MO' Rödel as Chair and Saskia Kress and Fabian Leendertz as Vice-Chairs.

STAFF

The number of staff at Frogs & Friends remained constant at three (2.8 FTE) throughout the year. From March to August 2025, an additional post (80%) in administrative management was filled. This post was made redundant at the end of the probationary period. In June, our external accountant, Adina Schlunke, also left us.

We continued to work with our trusted freelancers. Bea Seggering (concept) and Sebastian Baurmann (design) are working intensively on creating the new prototype for our wildlife online platform Wild at Home, Bernd Schultheis on the Filmterrarium, and Ines Bärwald (layout), Jonas Lieberknecht (illustration), Susann Knakowske (video) and Ulrike Sterblich (text and translation) continue to form part of our editorial team.



Team weekend in Seebeck in July – unfortunately, the planned Frog Olympics literally washed out.

A GREAT NEW FROG FOR OUR GREAT CHAIR-WOMAN

A NEWLY DESCRIBED SPECIES OF FROG IS NOW KNOWN AS SASKIA'S GRASS FROG (PTYCHADENA SASKIAE) – IN HONOUR OF SASKIA KRESS, CO-FOUNDER OF FROGS & FRIENDS

'This isn't going to work; I'm getting involved now.' Looking back, that sentence marked the starting point for Frogs & Friends and everything that has developed from it. It was spoken by Saskia Kress shortly before Christmas 2012. By that point, Björn Encke had drawn up a spatial concept for an amphibian zoo, thanks to the considerable expertise of MO Rödel, Frank Mutschmann and Heiko Werning. Modelled on Sea Life, the focus here was to be entirely on amphibians – and because we knew that they couldn't tell their own stories, the planned experience was based on a strong interweaving of natural habitat sections and digital as well as tactile exhibits.

The stories were (and still are) good, but it was completely unclear how we could actually go about implementing such a project. It was a happy coincidence that Saskia was, at precisely that moment, reinventing herself with her film production company Filmtank as a provider and (via the Interactive Media Foundation) facilitator of cross-media projects. And so the development of the Amphizoo concept, which ultimately led to the founding of Frogs & Friends, became one of the Interactive Media Foundation's first cross-media projects.

With a clear and critical eye and unshakeable optimism, she has a gift for motivating you even after she has just picked apart an idea she considers misguided. In the end, virtually every piece of her criticism led to a better solution.

With Citizen Conservation, that wasn't necessary. When we presented the idea to her in 2017, her verdict was as succinct as it was clear: 'I get that straight away. Let's do it.' And once again, the fact remains: without Saskia, Citizen Conservation would not be anywhere near where we are today. We are delighted and grateful to have her on board in a position of responsibility as Vice-Chair of both the association and the Supervisory Board of Citizen Conservation. The rest is history. Saskia stuck with it. Her ability to untangle knots has been the key to almost everything we've managed to achieve since then.

And because of all this, our chairman, MO Rödel, came up with the idea some time ago to name a species – newly described by him and his team at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin – after her. The choice fell on a small West African frog which, in terms of its appearance, well, doesn't really stand out from the crowd of other small brown African frogs. It lives in the leaf litter of evergreen lowland rainforests in a strip stretching from eastern Sierra Leone to western Côte d'Ivoire. So its appearance isn't the reason for the naming. What is decisive, however, is that it possesses a characteristic trait that links it to its namesake: the ability to make explosive leaps, enabling it to cover long distances from a standing start...

With a head-body length of 40.4–55.2 mm, the females of this species are slightly larger than the males, which measure 32.9–43.7 mm. Saskia's Grass Frog presumably uses small, temporary puddles on the forest floor for breeding.



On 16 December 2025, MO Rödel, chairman of Frogs & Friends, presented the holotype of the 'Ptychadena saskiae | Saskia's Grass Frog' coin to his deputy, Saskia Kress.





All four frogs of the genus *Odontobatrachus smithi* taken in December 2024 from the Leipzig Zoo are doing well. However, no footage has managed to capture more than three of them together in the same frame.

2025 WAS ANOTHER WILD YEAR AT HOME – AND IN AFRICA

Three main topics occupied us in 2025. The progress of our work in Africa, specifically focusing on the Nimba Toad and Goliath Frog; our work within the Feuersalamander.NET initiative, with an emphasis on research and the installation of containers as part of the Steigerwald project; and our wildlife online platform 'Wild at Home', which completed its metamorphosis from the initial beta version to a new prototype over the course of the year.

FILM TERRARIUM

We've been quietly pottering away at our 'Big Brother' terrarium for the Sabre-toothed Frogs. Five cameras with motion detectors monitor the activities of these West African frogs, which live near waterfalls. The difference from conventional surveillance cameras is the necessary pre-roll function: if a frog jumps and then immediately sits motionless somewhere again, a conventional camera would actually only record the frog sitting still. The image data therefore has to be processed by a computer at all times so that, in the event of movement, the seconds leading up to the action are also captured on video. In practice, light reflections and water droplets landing on the lenses also cause minor issues, but the good news is: in principle, the system works. The rest is just fine-tuning.

SALAMANDER IN THE BOX

After months of preparation, the time had finally come in January 2025: two converted shipping containers were delivered to northern Bavaria to expand and professionalise the facilities for protecting the Fire Salamander – one is now at Nuremberg Zoo and the other at Hundshaupten Wildlife Park. But first things first.

The chytrid fungus *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (abbreviated to *Bsal*) is spreading continuously and threatening native Fire Salamander populations. Consequently, the Bavarian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature (LBV) and other partners are collaborating with Frogs & Friends to advance the protection of Fire Salamanders in Bavaria as part of the species conservation

programme. Among other things, this required additional capacity for the long-term housing of ex situ populations. The solution: converted shipping containers. These have already been used successfully for decades to house endangered amphibians in various regions of the world – and now also for the Fire Salamander in Hundshaupten. At Nuremberg Zoo, the container has made it possible to replace the temporary facility where animals infected with Fire Salamander disease were previously treated. This means that the Nuremberg container now offers two completely separate rooms: one for treatment and the other for the temporary housing of the animals before they are transferred, for example to Hundshaupten, to form the basis of the reserve population.



Delivery of the container to Hundshaupten, where it was hoisted into position over trees, a stream and a wall in freezing temperatures.



The happy team in Hundshaupten after successfully installing the container



In Nuremberg, too, everyone was very pleased when the container was placed at its designated location without any major difficulties.

THE GREAT SALAMANDER SEEK

So how do infected animals get to Nuremberg for treatment and then on to Hundshaupten to establish a stable ex situ population? The plan for 2025 was to test Fire Salamanders in the Steigerwald for *Bsal* during the main activity periods in spring and autumn – in collaboration with the Stiftung Artenschutz, the Chair of Conservation Biology and Forest Ecology at the University of Würzburg and its Fabrikschleichach Ecological Station, as well as the Bavarian State Office for the Environment.

Animals that tested negative should be released back into their original habitat, whilst those that tested positive should form the basis of the conservation breeding programme following their treatment. Contrary to expectations, given the number of animals that had tested positive in the past, only a few animals tested positive in 2025. It is not yet possible to say what the exact reasons for this are, or whether this gives cause for hope.



A view inside the treatment room for animals infected with *Bsal*. The three heating cabinets, located in the right-hand corner behind the airlock, are central to the setup.

ON TO NEW RESEARCH

Despite decades of experience in the successful husbandry and breeding of Fire Salamanders, many questions remain unanswered. Some of these were listed in the accompanying feasibility study from 2022. Particularly with regard to the Fire Salamander, one of the key questions is the composition of its microbiome, as the fungus attacks the animals via the skin, and what influence environmental factors have in this regard. In collaboration with Hanover Adventure Zoo, the Chair of Zoo Animal Biology at the University of Frankfurt and the Department of Spatial and Environmental Sciences at the University of Trier, initial data on this can now be gathered from Fire Salamander husbandry programmes as part of Citizen Conservation.

The aim is to investigate the microbiome of both the skin and the gut in animals kept in different housing conditions. In doing so, we hope to understand the structure of the microbiome, the impact of different housing conditions, and how this compares with wild populations. We also aim to determine the relevance of the microbiome to the animals' health (particularly in cases of *Bsal* infection) and to potential reintroductions. Thanks to funding from the Association of Zoological Gardens (VdZ), the first samples were collected in 2025.



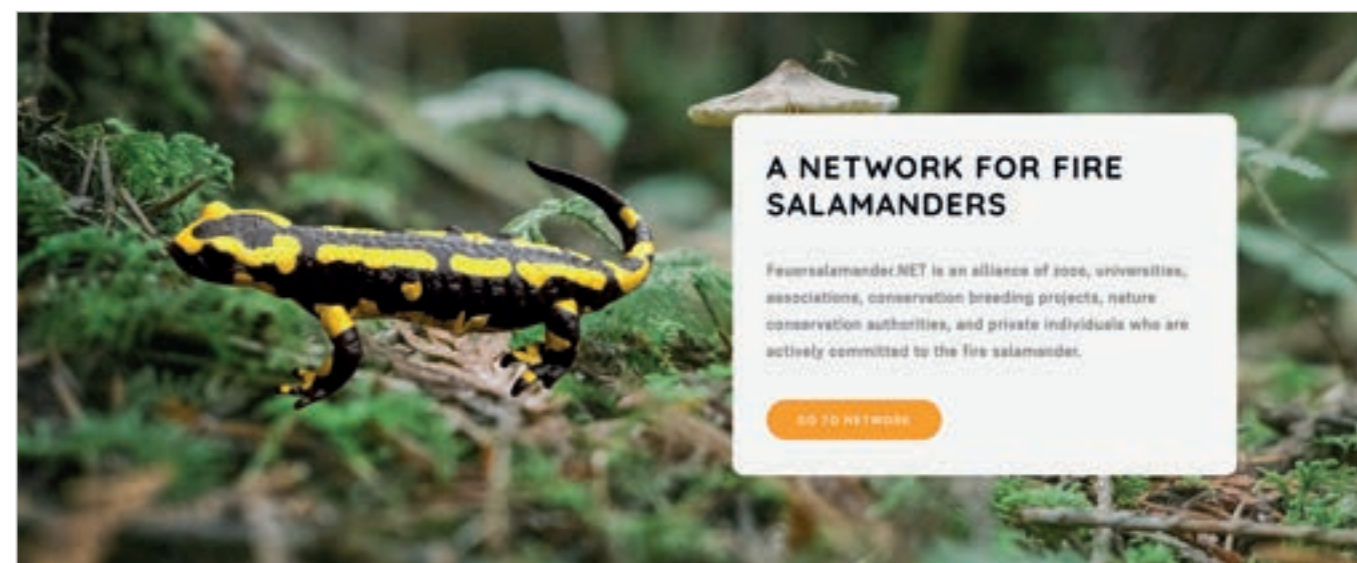
Unfortunately, the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park is currently the site of one of the latest outbreaks of *Bsal*. So far, Frogs & Friends has mainly been providing advice and acting as a mediator in this situation.



A skin swab from a Fire Salamander, taken using the standard procedure.



Ideally, four samples should be taken from each individual: swabs from the back, belly and cloaca, as well as a faecal sample.



Our newly launched website, feuersalamander.net, provides an overview of the network's members and features a blog where individual initiatives within the network can be showcased; it also highlights the threats facing salamanders.

NEWS FROM FEUERSALAMANDER.NET

The study of the microbiome is a joint project that emerged as part of the Feuersalamander.NET initiative launched by Frogs & Friends and Citizen Conservation. This project also gained new momentum in 2025. The network was founded in April 2024 at the Fire Salamander Symposium at Hanover Adventure Zoo. It comprises various scientific and zoological institutions, organisations and committed individuals. One of the network's aims is to establish Feuersalamander.NET as a central reporting, information and coordination hub for efforts relating to the conservation of Fire Salamanders and, in the future, Alpine Salamanders as well. To ensure that Feuersalamander.NET can be sustainably supported, Citizen Conservation and the Stiftung Artenschutz submitted an application for association funding to the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation at the end of 2024; unfortunately, however, this was re-

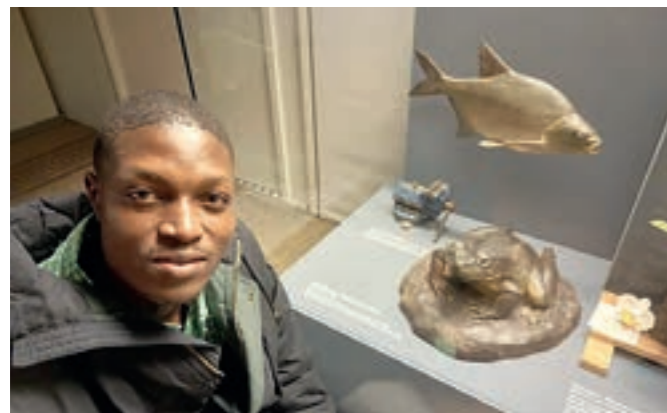
jected. To prevent the coordination efforts from coming to nothing, Citizen Conservation stepped in and commissioned the creation of a website to consolidate information from the network. This gives the various stakeholders an insight into the activities and projects of other dedicated Fire Salamander conservationists. The website feuersalamander.net went live in September 2025 and is currently managed by CC colleague Julia Bindl.

The main feature of the website at present is a blog showcasing projects relating to the Fire Salamander and the Alpine Salamander. The blog posts are written by the people in charge of each project and uploaded to the website by CC. So if you have a project that we could feature on feuersalamander.net, please feel free to contact Julia Bindl by email: julia.bindl@citizen-conservation.org

NEWS FROM OUR TWO FLAGSHIP SPECIES

GOLIATH FROG – A VISITOR FROM CAMEROON

The two projects on the Nimba Toad and the Goliath Frog began in 2025 with a visit to Berlin by Sedrick Tsekane in February. Sedrick carries out monitoring of Goliath Frogs and their nests in the Ebo Forest in Cameroon on behalf of CAMBIO (Cameroon Biodiversity Association). He is also investigating various aspects of the species' biology as part of his PhD thesis. One of these is the tadpoles' diet. To this end, he collected several samples in the field, which were now due for analysis. Specifically, the samples were examined at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin for their carbon and nitrogen isotopes. These provide insights into the trophic level at which the tadpoles are situated, i.e. where they stand in the food web or food pyramid. By comparing these with environmental samples, it is possible to determine whether the tadpoles consume mainly plant-based food, animal-based food, or both. The Berlin laboratory has been carrying out such analyses for decades, and so Sedrick was able to learn first-hand from the best how to prepare the samples for the mass spectrometer and how to interpret the results afterwards. The manuscript for a scientific publication on this topic is still in progress.



Sedrick Tsekane in front of a model of a Goliath Frog at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin



Goliath Frog Meeting at the Kreuzberg office in Berlin

THE NIMBA TOAD – MONITORING, UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND THE FIRST YOUNG IN HUMAN CARE

In June and July, it was time once again for the annual monitoring of the Nimba Toads. Johannes Penner flew to Guinea for this purpose and, together with his colleagues from Guinea, carried out the annual survey across the 70 long-term monitoring sites. Slightly more animals were found than in the previous year, suggesting a slight upward trend in population numbers in the Nimba Mountains. However, it is still unclear whether this actually means there are more animals, or whether this year simply saw more animals active due to increased rainfall. Unfortunately, due to climate change, the start of the rainy season is much harder to predict than it used to be.

In addition to the monitoring, preliminary studies were also carried out for potential future research projects. These are necessary because iron ore mining and the

associated habitat changes could adversely affect the Nimba Toad. Many questions remain as to how this might specifically affect the species and how to prevent its extinction. The preliminary studies included, among other things, acoustic monitoring and measurements of temperature and humidity in the toad's microhabitat. We also investigated whether the experiment carried out in 2021 to improve the habitat was successful, whether Nimba Toads can be individually marked, and whether they might even be tracked using telemetry. The latter is not possible using standard methods, primarily due to the small size of the animals, but may be feasible in the future thanks to new technical possibilities. It should be emphasised that the habitat improvements did not work. The – short-term – rearing of Nimba Toads in human care was successful. The animals were easy to keep and could be well fed with ants. One pregnant female even gave birth to her young whilst in care; the young were then released directly at the site where their mother had been found.

DIY TERRARIUM BUILDING

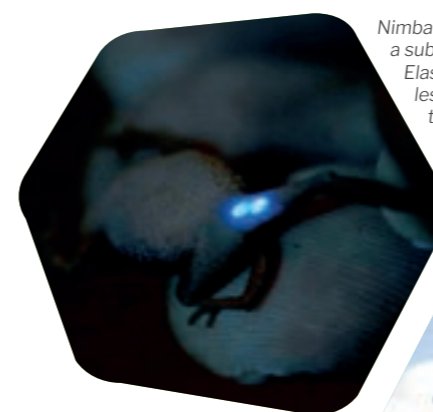
The aim of any ex situ breeding programme is to maintain several populations at different locations. This helps to mitigate the impact of unforeseeable disasters – in which all the animals at a single site might die. However, this applies not only to ex situ programmes, but also to natural habitats. The primary objective must therefore be to spread the risk of extinction and to maintain as many and as large populations as possible. In Guinea, there has been no previous experience with the keeping and breeding of amphibians. In 2025, we took the first steps in this regard. And these are often very mundane – for instance, terrariums simply cannot be bought in Guinea. Importing them would be expensive and cumbersome. Therefore, we ordered panes of specific dimensions from a glazier in Conakry, which we then glued together in the mountains using aquarium silicone. For the staff of the authorities involved in the monitoring so far, it was a new and unfamiliar experience to get their hands dirty and make terrariums themselves. It probably wouldn't win any design awards, but it worked! The aim is to keep an ecologically similar but non-threatened species in future and thus gain initial practical experience on the ground.

STILL THREATENED

At present, there is no prospect of the Nimba Toad's habitat being fully protected. On the contrary, it looks as though open-cast mining is set to begin soon. To ensure that the resulting disruption is kept to a minimum, an 'Environmental and Social Impact Assessment' was carried out. We were able to contribute to this process and incorporate the knowledge we have gathered over many years regarding the Nimba Toad, one of several endemic and highly endangered species. This was a lengthy and not always straightforward process. However, it ensured that all our knowledge, as well as all outstanding questions, were clearly addressed and could therefore be taken into account in the decision-making process. We remain vigilant and are doing everything in our power to ensure that the Nimba Toad does not become extinct.



The natural habitat of the Nimba Toad – the grassland above the tree line – as seen from our perspective



Nimba Toads were individually marked using a substance known as 'Visual Implant Elastomer'. This involves injecting a harmless dye under the skin of the thighs; the dye glows under UV light, thereby enabling individual identification.



The Nimba Toad's habitat, as seen from its perspective. Here, it lives under, between and on the grasses.

The current core team in Guinea, from left to right: Johannes Penner, Blaise Pivi, Francois Gbémou and Joseph Doumbia.



First steps in building a terrarium in Guinea. It's not as easy as it looks, with the glass panes cut rather roughly and when you're working with silicone for the first time.



Keeping Nimba Toads in simple containers on a temporary basis has worked extremely well.



Two automatic call recording devices at Mare d'Hivernage in the Nimbas Mountains

WILD AT HOME

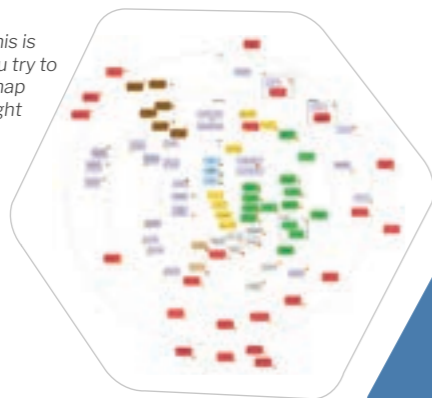
IN A NEW GUISE

2025 saw us continue work on our prototype of 'Wild at Home' (WaH), which we began developing in autumn 2024 based on the platform's beta version. The core team continues to consist of UX concept designer Bea Seggering, front-end designer Sebastian Baurmann and project organiser Vanessa Dubberke. The rest of the team was invited to workshops on various occasions to advise the WaH team on content and technical matters where appropriate.

The prototype focused on developing the role of Harald Halter, a private keeper who uses WaH to manage the wild animals he looks after for himself and as part of a conservation breeding programme, and to network with other animal keepers. In addition to Harald, the prototype took into account the perspective of Heiko Artmanager who, as his German 'surname' suggests, is the species manager (in German 'Artmanager') of a conservation breeding programme and uses WaH to manage the animals and participants in the programme. This prototype was finalised over the course of the year and clearly illustrates WaH's new design, the further development and expansion of the beta version's features, and – a factor that will be relevant for collaboration with a new IT partner – the interconnections and high complexity of the platform, which the prototype helps to visualise and make more tangible.

Responsive design also came more into focus in 2025. Initially, the plan had been to offer only individual features on mobile devices. With the further development of the prototype to include hover cards – which we use as a kind of index card for bundled information overviews – and the positive assessment by external experts regarding the technical feasibility of a fully responsive version of WaH, the aim is now to make the entire platform accessible on mobile devices – and thereby appeal to new target groups.

A first draft! By the way, this is what it looks like when you try to develop a technical roadmap after putting a lot of thought into it.



At the end of 2025, plans were also put in place to present the prototype in short, engaging and appealing videos. The prototype is a click-through mock-up, meaning it perfectly illustrates features and processes, provided you know which buttons are clickable and linked. The videos are therefore intended, on the one hand, to help bring the prototype to life. On the other hand, clear marketing videos are also useful for sales pitches. At the end of 2025, these ideas are still at the concept stage.



Bea Seggering and Sebastian Baurmann present WaH at the CC Annual Advisory Board Meeting and show what the prototype looks like in the background – which may seem confusing to the untrained eye.

WAH ON THE ROAD

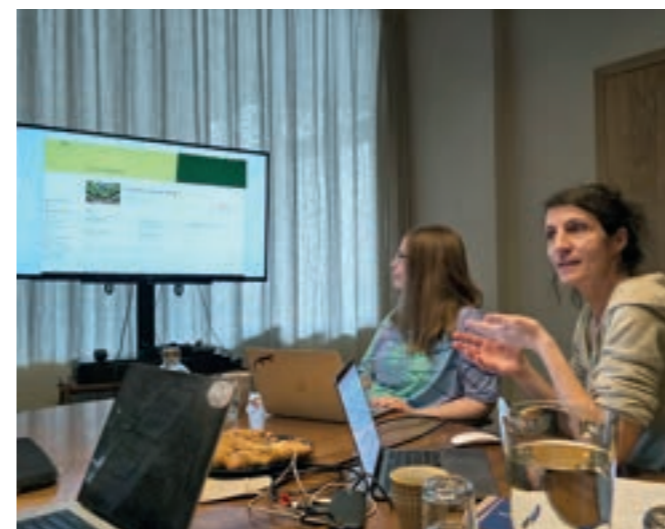
With the prototype in tow, we attended various events in 2025 to showcase the platform and present its current state of development. Of particular note were the DTG Annual Conference in Wolgast (DTG – German Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and the DGHT Annual Conference in Bonn (DGHT – German Society for Herpetology and Terrarium Science). This allowed us to present WaH's new vision – which differs significantly from the existing beta version – to a wide audience of both institutional and private animal keepers, and it was received positively across the board. The feedback from DTG members, to whom WaH was presented for the first time, was particularly encouraging. Around half of the zoo representatives present indicated that they had a need for a solution such as WaH. It is encouraging that the numerous ideas we have put into WaH to make the platform interesting and supportive of work for institutions such as zoos are being well received.

TECHNICAL COST ESTIMATE

Now that the prototype was ready, the questions arose as to the technical effort required to implement the platform accordingly and to what extent the beta version could provide the technical foundation for this. To arrive at a valid assessment, we enlisted the help of an old acquaintance, Nicolas Bregenzer. Ten years ago, he had co-developed the 'Frogs & Friends' webdoc (interactive excursion). Now he helped us organise the individual components of the platform into meaningful packages and a chronological sequence from a developer's perspective, designed to enable a technically seamless implementation.

Which features are likely to take how long to implement and incur what costs? Where are we likely to face the greatest challenges?

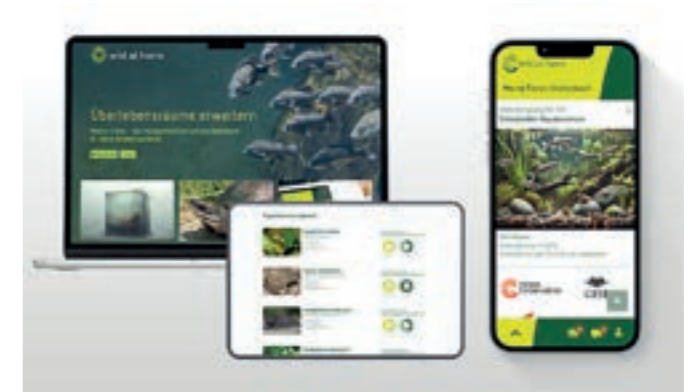
The technical perspective helped us assess which features could be prioritised in stages, so that we could launch a simple yet functional version with a fresh look in the next phase. This approach allows us to quickly establish a solid foundation for further development, one that can respond quite nimbly to feedback from the WaH community, who are set to start using the platform as soon as possible.



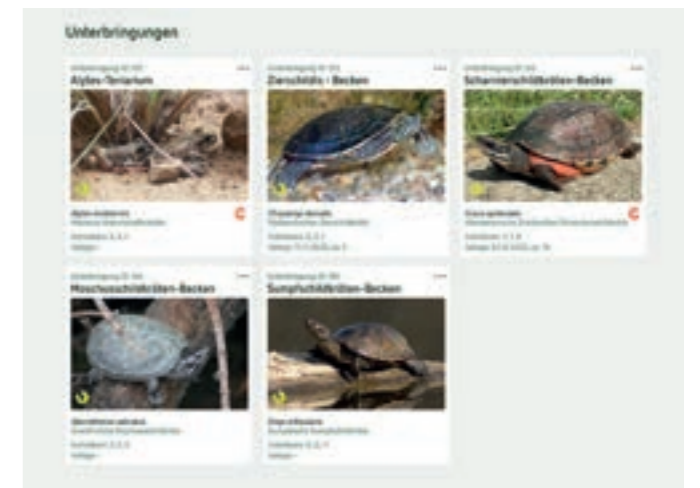
It's WaH workshop time: How does it actually work technically when more than one species coexists in housing? What happens to the data when animals leave the platform, for example through sale to an external buyer? And so on and so forth...

WANTED: PRODUCT MANAGER FOR CONSERVATION PLATFORM

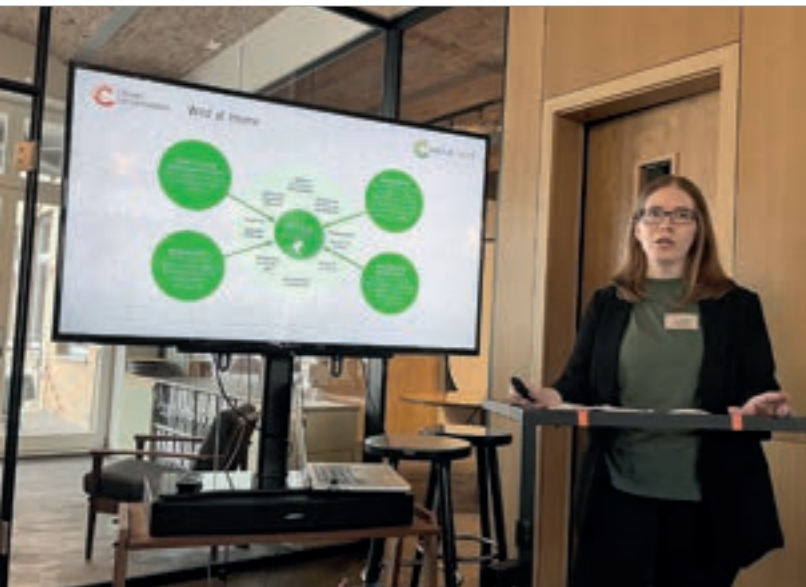
At the end of 2025, we published a job advertisement for a digital product manager to help us successfully launch WaH on the market. As the project progressed, it became clear – through feedback from authorities, institutional and private animal keepers and thus potential users – that there is a huge demand for a platform like WaH – just as there is for our vision for the web app. It has also become clear that we need support to achieve this. With this new team member, we aim to strengthen our position even further in terms of technical expertise and experience in developing and managing a market-ready digital product.



WaH will be designed for various devices: desktop PCs and laptops, tablets and smartphones.



The hover cards, which allow us to display detailed data sets in a responsive manner.



Vanessa Dubberke presented Wild at Home at three annual conferences: the German Zoo Association (DTG), the DGHT, and the CC Advisory Board meeting.



Strong networking. At the VdZ Wildlife Forum on 19 June, two members of the Frogs & Friends board – Saskia Kress and Fabian Leendertz – took their places on the panel, albeit in their roles as film producer and founding director of the Helmholtz Institute for One Health, respectively.

PRESENTATIONS & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, CONFERENCES

2025 was a year in which we did not launch any new major projects, largely because we still have a huge project on the go with Wild at Home, on which we wanted – and needed – to focus. Wild at Home was presented at two conferences specifically, but naturally also featured in our presentations on many other occasions. The Nimba Toad project, as well as our activities relating to Feuersalamander.NET and the amphibium at Hanover Zoo, were also discussed at several conferences, though often in connection with CC. For this reason, we have omitted a detailed list of our speaking engagements and event participation here and refer you to the comprehensive list in the CC section on page 44.

AMPHIBIAN SURVIVAL ALLIANCE (ASA)

Global networking and collaboration may be laborious, but they are at least as rewarding. As a global umbrella organisation, the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) strives to bring together the various stakeholders in the amphibian sector, thereby helping to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of amphibian conservation.

In 2020, Björn Encke was appointed to the Supervisory Board (Global Council) by Simon Stuart, then Chairman of the ASA Supervisory Board; the board initially consisted of 20 members. In 2021, Vivek Menon took over as Chair of the board – at the same time, a comprehensive restructuring process was initiated, as part of which, among other things, the Supervisory Board was reduced to nine members in 2024.

In addition to the regular tasks (assessing applications for funding or membership), this role offers, above all, a deeper insight into the complex landscape at an international level. Socio-political trends are reflected everywhere, even when it comes to frogs. Different cultures and fundamental beliefs come into contact and must be taken into account in order to reach joint decisions that do not always correspond 100 per cent to one's own convictions. But that is part of the job, and it works so well precisely because this committee is, without exception, made up of colleagues who always seem to be concerned with the matter at hand rather than with personal sensitivities.

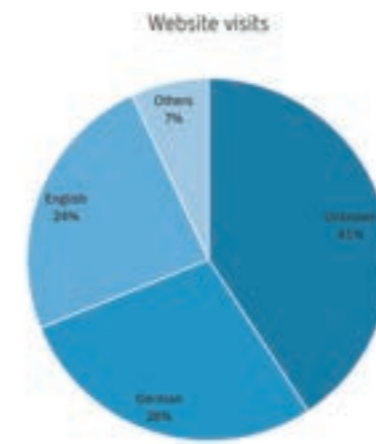
WEBSITE & GOOGLE ADS

Following the high visitor numbers of the previous year, figures for 2025 were down again. The website received a total of 14,807 visits (-15%) and recorded 88,583 page views (-25%). The usage of German- and English-language content has become more evenly balanced again compared to the previous year. A notable trend was the increased use of desktop devices (74%), which could indicate more intensive use in a work or study context. There was a significant decline in traffic from search engines (-40%), which had a corresponding impact on total visits.

Nine news articles and a feature in the 'World of Amphibians' section on the use of the poison of the Golden Poison Frog, as well as a web report on 'Amphibians as a medical treasure trove', were published. The most frequent visits were to the homepages (DE/EN), the interactive webdoc and the news item 'True Crime

in the Mountains' on the Alpine Salamander project. The latter generated the year's highest traffic peak in November. Another spike in December was generated by a job advertisement, which was among the most-clicked German-language pages. Despite a decline in overall figures, the sustained activity indicates a stable, international readership. The ongoing Google Ads campaigns were paused from November onwards for technical reasons.

By that point, they had generated 53,742 impressions (-24%) and 2,912 clicks (-64%), with a total spend of \$5,345. The average CPC remained low at \$0.55. A decision on the future of the Google Ads campaigns is due to be made in the course of 2026. Google Search Console provides insight into organic reach from search engine results and recorded 161,000 impressions and 1,370 clicks.



Following the launch of the Amphibium in 2024, which attracted many German-speaking website visitors, the ratio of German- to English-language page views returned to normal in 2025.



The web feature 'Amphibians are a medical treasure trove' completes the series of three video formats from this section shown on Amphibium.

NEWSLETTER

Two newsletters were sent out in 2025, in both German and English. Unfortunately, subscriber numbers have been stagnating for several years. The German newsletter had 127 subscribers, which is three fewer than in 2024. The number of subscribers to the English newsletter remained steady at 43 in 2025. The open rate for the German newsletter was 45.8% (2024: 61%), and the click-through rate was around 7.5% (2024: 12.5%). Both figures thus performed worse than in the previous year, but compared to other non-profit organisations, they remain above average (open rate: approx. 40%, click-through rate: approx. 3.3%). The English newsletter has an average open rate of 43% (2024: approx. 52%) and a click-through rate of 5.8% (2024: approx. 6%) – here too, we are above the general average.

The December issue of our newsletter was sent to 127 people and generated a click-through rate of 10.4%.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Following the shift in 2024 towards focusing more on content related to its own projects rather than a broadcasting channel, Frogs & Friends consolidated this approach in 2025. Although reach declined slightly on some channels, the quality of the content remained high and the community remained engaged.

FACEBOOK

Facebook remained stable with 4,627 followers (-1%) and a consistent reach (+1% to 21,750). However, the number of content interactions fell by 13% to 1,756. The post with the most views was about the 'Amphifa' movement, a term combining 'amphibians' with 'Antifa' that was used on social media in autumn 2025 when protesters in the US took to the streets dressed in frog costumes. Posts about the joint team weekend with Citizen Conservation, as well as posts on amphibian research and zoo collaborations, also performed well. One reason for the loss of followers could also be that usage of the platform is generally declining slightly.

INSTAGRAM

On Instagram, total reach remained steady at 20,239 (-1%), whilst the number of followers rose slightly to 1,768 (+7%). Content interactions fell by 15% compared to the previous year. Higher view counts were achieved, for example, through posts marking the first anniversary of the Amphibium at Hanover Adventure Zoo. Some also resulted from mentions by partners such as Thomas Ziegler, species conservation expert and curator at Cologne Zoo. The aforementioned post about the 'Amphifa' was cross-posted on Instagram and also achieved comparatively high view counts there.

LINKEDIN

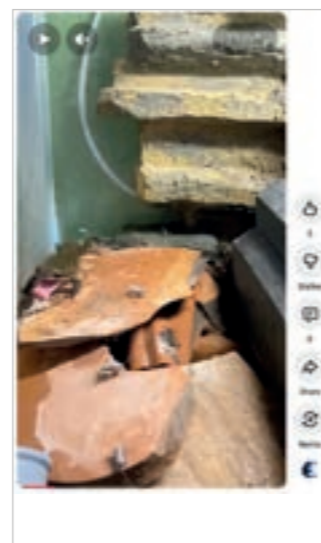
Although F&F was only able to publish a few posts on LinkedIn, it did manage to double its number of followers to 90 (+104%). The impressions (1,273, -40%) primarily reflect the lower posting frequency. Nevertheless, the rising number of followers indicates a growing professional interest in F&F topics.

YOUTUBE

In 2025, web reports on foot-flagging frogs and amphibians were published on YouTube as a treasure trove of medical information. In total, the channel recorded 21,150 views (-52%) with a watch time of 377 hours (-70%). Furthermore, a short film about feeding Sabre-toothed Frogs in the film terrarium attracted many views – which also caused the average viewing time to drop. Following the exceptionally successful previous year with the 'Making of Amphibium' video, usage patterns returned to a stable baseline, and 2025 delivered the second-best figures since the channel's inception.



The post, featuring the political pun 'Amphifa', received over 5,600 views on Facebook and Instagram and was shared more than 40 times.



A slow-motion clip from the film terrarium showed *Odontobatrachus smithi* feeding and was posted as a short video on YouTube. The short video racked up 1,500 views on its first day.



Haltung rettet Arten



Und zwar nicht nur die hübschen oder niedlichen. Nein, wir bemühen uns sogar um ein so seltsam widerborstiges Urvieh wie *Cuora cyclornata*, die Vietnamesische Dreistreifen-Scharnierschildkröte. Bei der kommt nicht nur der Name etwas umständlich daher. Man möchte nicht mit ihr verheiratet sein – sie erträgt Partner nur für Augenblicke und das nur zur Tag- und Nachtgleiche. Ansonsten wird kurzer Prozess gemacht. Dass sie fast ausgestorben ist, hat aber noch andere Gründe. Also, wir mögen sie. Man muss sie ja nicht heiraten. Nur halten! Wir sagen euch, wie es geht.



Mehr Infos zur Art, zum Zuchtprogramm und zur Haltung bekommen
Sie auf unserer Website: citizen-conservation.org/cc-arten/

Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH
Spendenkonto GLS Bank
IBAN: DE38 4306 0967 1271 7068 00
www.citizen-conservation.org

Not all CC species are particularly beautiful to look at or otherwise exciting, but that doesn't make them any less worthy of being saved. That's why, in 2025, we launched a new series of print adverts: Species conservation through species bashing!

DARWIN & GOLIATH VOLUME 2

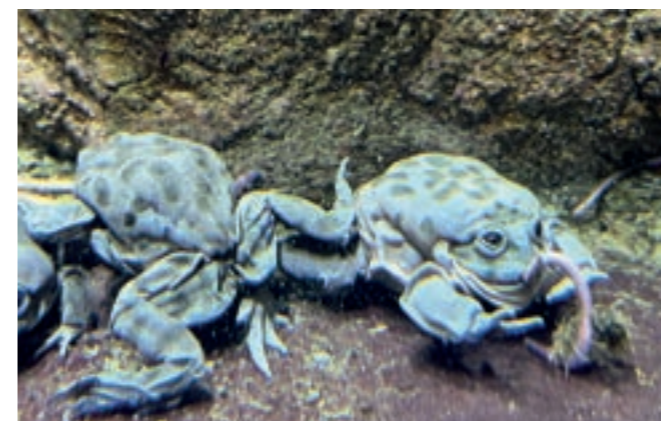
A HOME FOR AMPHIBIANS – DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE AMPHIBIAN HOUSE AT HANOVER ADVENTURE ZOO

Just in time for the first anniversary of the Amphibium at Hanover Adventure Zoo, which opened in May 2024, we were also able to publish 'Darwin & Goliath Volume 2'. Across 64 pages, the magazine documents the three-year development of this unique animal enclosure, which was entirely designed by Frogs & Friends and realised in collaboration with Hanover Adventure Zoo.

After a year and a half in operation, it is clear that the concept also works from a zoological perspective. Almost all species have now successfully bred, and the planting, tailored to the respective habitats on display, has also become established – both of which are a great credit to area manager Revin Meyer and his team.



A printed copy can be ordered by making a donation with the reference 'D&G Vol. 2' and including your address (donation account: Frogs & Friends, IBAN DE09 4306 0967 1173 1722 00).



Unruly earthworm spaghetti: as expected, the quirky Titicaca Water Frogs are among the visitors' favourites.



It is very reassuring when a plan actually works out. The Lesser Rock Skipper (*Stauroides parvus*) are breeding, both in the recreated habitat and in the breeding tank in the species wall.

The breeding of the Golden Poison Frogs (*Phyllobates terribilis*) is underway.



Link to the second issue of Darwin & Goliath: https://t1p.de/darwin_goliath_vol-2_en

21
Just the sort of Christmas present a proper Frogs & Friends member receives.

21
Fish Friends for Life – visiting our CC participant at the Futterhaus on Hermannplatz in Berlin

19
Look at that mouthfull! This spoonbill sturgeon is swimming around at our CC participant NaturaGart in Ibbenbüren.

20
Now (not) coming to your theatre: The Simple Life of Julia and Tina at the DTG conference in Nordhorn...

18
...and the fun must go on! This time, CC Advisory Board member Arne Schulze is getting involved too.

17
A group of pilgrims headed to Łódź. Together with Volker Homes, Julia Kögler (VdZ) and Tobias Kohl (Stiftung Artenschutz), we travelled to the EAZA conference in neighbouring Poland on 9 September.

15
Only one can become Germany's Next Reptillaboy: Heiko Werning as the cover model.

14
Managing Director Björn Encke has some unexpected sporting talents up his sleeve.

14
Exhausted but happy, Johannes Penner rolls up to Heiko Werning, who has come to collect him at BER, after landing on his return from Guinea.

13
The three colleagues by the barbecue: Tina Nagorzanski, Vanessa Dubberke and Julia Bindl at the team weekend in Seebeck

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3
Heiko Werning visits a truly impressive team: Pízeň Zoo is a real biodiversity hotspot.

2
We have Lesser Rock Skipper at CC thanks to the fantastic work of our colleagues at Schönbrunn Zoo. It's absolutely thrilling to be able to see these little frogs live in their magnificent tank in Vienna.

4
Markus Willeke, an artist from Berlin, paints endangered animals, amongst other subjects, using a fascinating watercolour technique. The Golden Poison Frogs from CC are the perfect subjects for this.

5
A wintry Berlin experience at the Fridays for Future strike on Valentine's Day for our colleague Sedrick Tsekane from HerpCam in Cameroon.

6
The curator is also fascinated by flying reptiles and tries to pass on his passion for biodiversity of all kinds to the next generation through field trips.

11
Frogs & Friends board members Fabian Leendertz and Saskia Kress were invited onto the podium at the VdZ Wildlife Forum in their roles as Founding Director of the Helmholtz Institute One Health and film producer.

10
Lion brothers: Björn and Dag Encke on the river Havel during the networking evening at the VdZ conference

8
People staring at toads: a rare amphibious, but very welcome visitor to the office in Kreuzberg in Berlin.

9
A remarkable coincidence observed at the Berlin Garden Talks in June: Johannes Vogel giving a keynote speech in front of an African Buffalo.

7
Keeping a clear view. Vanessa Dubberke attempting to hypnotise Lake Tanganyika cichlids on the sidelines of the DTG conference in Greifswald.

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A great catch for CC, too: our new species manager, Julia Bindl

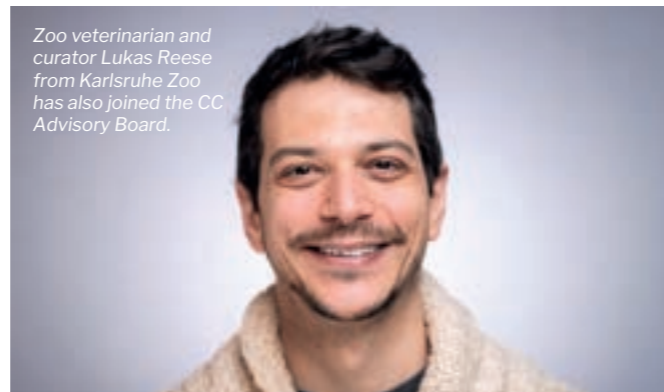
FROM THE COMMITTEES

SHAREHOLDERS' MEETING AND SUPERVISORY BOARD

The shareholders' meeting of Citizen Conservation (CC) now consists of three members: Mark-Oliver Rödel (Frogs & Friends), Jörg Junhold (VdZ) and Marco Schulz (DGHT). Markus Monzel has stepped down from his role as shareholder representative but remains on the Supervisory Board as an ordinary member alongside Marco Schulz, representing the DGHT. The other members of the Supervisory Board are Stephan Hering-Hagenbeck (VdZ), Mark-Oliver Rödel (Frogs & Friends), Gert Emmrich (DTG) and Olivier Pagan (Basel Zoo). The Chairman of the Supervisory Board is Tim Schikora (VdZ), with Saskia Kress (Frogs & Friends) as his deputy.



The new CC Advisory Board member Michel Ansermet at Conservation Day at Aquatis Lausanne



Zoo veterinarian and curator Lukas Reese from Karlsruhe Zoo has also joined the CC Advisory Board.

NEW MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

We were also able to further strengthen the CC Advisory Board in 2025. With the addition of Michel Ansermet, Managing Director of Aquatis Lausanne – a large exhibition aquarium and terrarium situated directly on Lake Geneva – we have gained a specialist from the terrarium and aquarium scene who not only strengthens our 'Swiss National Group' but, through his close ties to Italian-speaking Switzerland and our southern neighbour, also acts as a bridgehead to Italy and is therefore set to play a key role in establishing our Italy Steering Group (see page 29). Lukas Reese is a curator and veterinarian at Karlsruhe Zoo and also a proven amphibian specialist. Finally, Uwe Seidel joins us as a private keeper who is a leading expert specifically on the *Salamandra* genus, but who also brings a wealth of knowledge as a general terrarium keeper and has been closely associated with CC and its Fire Salamander project since its inception. We are delighted to have this valuable support!

STAFF

Julia Bindl took up her post as Species Manager at Citizen Conservation on 1 April 2025. This brought the number of staff at CC to three (2.55 FTE = full-time equivalent, i.e. 2.55 full-time positions).

As part of the establishment of the Alpine Salamander Competence Centre, a mini-job was also created for Uwe Seidel (0.1 FTE). As an expert in salamander keeping, he supports the facilities at the Sachsenhagen Wildlife and Species Conservation Centre, Hannover Adventure Zoo, and the further development of Feuersalamander.NET.

Apart from this special appointment, under the management agreement between Frogs & Friends and CC, the fortunes of both organisations were steered at the end of 2025 by six permanent staff members (5.35 FTE) under the management of Björn Encke. The personnel contribution from Frogs & Friends amounted to a net total of 1.2 FTE. The total staffing requirement for the operation of Citizen Conservation thus amounted to 3.75 full-time equivalents (FTE).



With CC from the very beginning, but now also officially on the Advisory Board and working part-time on Alpine Salamander matters: Uwe Seidel

GOOD CHEMISTRY

From 1 April 2025, we were able to fill our newly created species management post with Julia Bindl. Julia is a qualified biochemist and has been a passionate aquarist for over 20 years, having dedicated herself to keeping gobies in her own home. She knows exactly what makes private animal-keeping enthusiasts tick, because she is one herself and, as such, is deeply rooted in the community. It doesn't matter that this fish-loving woman will initially be looking after our amphibian and reptile collections at CC – the spirit of wildlife keeping and breeding remains the same.



'Fish lady' Julia Bindl has quickly taken a liking to reptiles too...



We are not only gaining a fantastic colleague, but also a gifted fish photographer. Pictured here: a Blue Neon Goby.

STABILITY IN TURBULENT TIMES

2025 was a year of global political upheavals. It was perhaps the speech given by US Vice-President J. D. Vance on 14 February at the Munich Security Conference that suddenly brought home the realisation that a new world order is currently taking shape, one that breaks with existing international rules and objectives. Not only have the major global issues of climate change and the biodiversity crisis suddenly ceased to play a significant role in public discourse and political action, but they are now also being actively denied by the US – the world’s leading economic and military power – and measures to tackle them are being deliberately opposed. Of course, this is only possible if one also disputes, distorts or suppresses all scientific findings on the subject, which is why hostility towards science has become a hallmark of the new right-wing populist movements.

Citizen Conservation, on the other hand, has been committed to the opposite since its inception. Our guiding principle has always been science-based action. Our approach stems from the need to counter-act species extinction caused by human activity, and we believe in the power of cooperation as a core human competence and in the necessity of international collaboration based on mutual respect. Even though the wind is currently blowing strongly in our faces, one of the great advantages of CC is that our participants can simply get on with it: the joy and satisfaction of having achieved something very specific, something visible and quantifiable in the incubator, tadpole tank or rearing aquarium through the breeding of highly endangered species, is the driving force behind our actions. And the knowledge that our own efforts will only bear fruit in the long term within a network in partnership with others – because this is the only way a species can be truly secured for the coming decades – shows us every day just how indispensable cooperation is.



Team workshop in Seebeck, Brandenburg (Germany): Open-air office



The 2025 team, comprising permanent staff and external consultants: Kirsten Lenk, Heiko Werning, Tina Nagorzanski, Björn Encke, Julia Bindl, Vanessa Dubberke, Johannes Penner, Bea Seggering (from left to right)

We are therefore all the more delighted that CC 2025 has been able to further expand its partnerships. This is partly due to the growing number of participants from a wide variety of sectors of civil society, but also thanks to the funding that makes our work possible in the first place.

New additions to our list of funding partners in 2025 include Schönbrunn Zoo, Rostock Zoo, Nuremberg Zoo and Leipzig Zoo. It is still these multi-year funding agreements that form the basis of our work and provide the necessary planning security.

Ultimately, the number of species we can care for at CC, as well as our ability to foster greater public acceptance of wildlife keeping, is directly linked to the amount of funding we have reliably at our disposal.

WITH NEW ENERGY

Thanks to the additional staff we took on in April, we have managed to keep the increasing day-to-day species management workload – driven by growth in participant and animal numbers – under control, and this has freed up time to tackle a number of outstanding issues from the past. For instance, after eight years, all housing contracts have been revised and supplemented with species conservation appendices tailored precisely to each species, we were able to develop guidelines for animal transport and specific veterinary issues, and, last but not least, we have been able to create some previously missing care recommendations and species pages, draw up a first prototype stud book for the Mallorcan Midwife Toad that is ready for publication, and prepare for the inclusion of new species.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITH VIETNAM

The need for cooperation mentioned above refers not only to collaboration within coordinated conservation breeding programmes themselves, but also to the international framework in the sense of the One Plan Approach (OPA) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which provides for the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders both in relation to conservation measures in the natural habitat (*in situ*), involving local communities, and in human care (*ex situ*).

One example of this is the collaboration between Cologne Zoo and the Melinh Centre for Biodiversity in Vietnam, a branch of the Institute of Biology in Hanoi. As part of this partnership, CC has already launched several conservation breeding programmes with the support of its Vietnamese partners, specifically for the Vietnamese Crocodile Newt, the Bony-headed Toad and the Huu Lien Tiger Gecko.

This collaboration between CC, the Melinh Centre and Cologne Zoo, which has already been outstanding, was formally established on 20 November 2025 with the signing of a cooperation agreement between CC and Melinh. It formally sets out the collaboration that is already in place.

The Melinh Centre provides CC with founding animals for the establishment of conservation breeding programmes outside Vietnam, in collaboration with suitably qualified private and institutional animal keepers. CC is responsible for the coordination and management of this *ex situ* population. The aim is to maintain a genetically healthy population in the long term. Both partners support research into the species, gain experience in keeping and breeding them in human care, and establish and expand reserve populations, partly to be prepared for future reintroduction projects.

Finally, both partners carry out public relations work for the project. Furthermore, the cooperation agreement stipulates that the Vietnamese partners may, at any time, receive animals from CC that are not required for the maintenance of the reserve population, for reintroduction projects.

If necessary, animals can be specifically bred for this purpose with all available resources. Revenue generated from the sale of animals bred at CC that are not used within the programme is allocated to species conservation; a portion of this is returned to the Melinh Centre, through which the animals in question were made available to us.



The Melinh Centre for Biodiversity in Vietnam © Thomas Ziegler



Taking the Vietnamese Crocodile Newt as an example, Cologne Zoo has already successfully implemented various collaborative mechanisms, ranging from the establishment of a conservation breeding programme in CC through to marketing and reintroduction into the animal's native habitat. © Thomas Ziegler



Three strong partners: Thomas Ziegler (Cologne Zoo), Phuong Dang (Melinh Centre for Biodiversity) and Björn Encke (Citizen Conservation) at the EAZA conference

STEERING GROUP ITALY

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Italian Gecko Association (IGA) in July 2025 to establish a CC steering group in Italy. The Italian members are Franco Andreone, Emanuele Scanarini, Gabriele Carsana, Angelica Crottini and Leonardo Vignoli, who will be responsible, amongst other things, for communicating with and recruiting CC participants in Italy, but who will also support us with animal procurement, translation and fundraising.

The steering group acts as a direct point of contact for those interested in CC in Italy and can assist with any problems or technical queries, such as those relating to veterinary medicine or shipping. The CC office continues to manage and coordinate Italian participants and the animals in their care. The new CC Advisory Board member Michel Ansermet, who speaks Italian, acts as a liaison between the steering group and the CC office.



CC is also being discussed in Italian - here during Björn Encke's presentation at the IGA conference in June 2024, where the collaboration was launched, leading to the establishment of the Italian steering group a year later.

THIRD ANNUAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

At least in Berlin-Kreuzberg, the world is still in order: the annual CC meeting took place in 2025 for the eighth time, including the 2018 kick-off workshop, and for the third time under the new structure since the Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH was founded. On 17 and 18 January 2025, 24 members of the Advisory and Supervisory Boards held in-depth discussions and deliberations at CC's premises on Reichenberger Straße on how we can advance our key objective of expanding capacity to save endangered species in human care. The discussion covered a wide range of the most pressing issues facing our project: How do we manage conservation breeding programmes for individual amphibian, fish and reptile species in such a way that, even four decades later, healthy offspring are still living in our aquariums and terrariums, with as little loss of genetic diversity as possible? So that we would always be in a position to release viable animals back into the wild. And so that we can be confident of maintaining them in human care for even longer periods,



Ahead of the Advisory Board meeting, a strategy meeting was held with the heads of VdZ, the Stiftung Artenschutz and CC at the Federal Press Conference.



UX designer Bea Seggering presents the first version of the new prototype for our online platform, Wild at Home.

as a safeguard in view of the threatening conditions in their original habitats. How should we deal with animals that are no longer required in the breeding programmes? What veterinary examinations should be carried out routinely? How are the populations we already have in our care developing? For which species should a CC programme be established in the near future? And, of course: how can we successfully finance our ambitious project for the coming years and decades?

We were also able to present the FAQs on CC to our Advisory and Supervisory Boards, which we then published on our website following the subsequent discussion. In addition, we provided an update on the progress of our wildlife conservation database, Wild at Home (WaH).

This weekend of concentrated ex situ expertise was rounded off on Friday with a joint strategy meeting of the executive boards of the Association of Zoological Gardens (VdZ), the Stiftung Artenschutz and CC at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin, and on Sunday with the regular CC Supervisory Board meeting.



Intense discussions, but no one's heads are smoking yet! In the specialist groups #Amphibians (shown here), #Fish and #Reptiles, the Advisory Board members discuss updates and questions regarding our conservation breeding programmes.



A long-standing tradition: the famous staircase photo at our annual advisory board meeting

ALPINE SALAMANDER CENTRE OF COMPETENCE

Sometimes things happen that cannot be planned for. In this case, we were fortunately reasonably well prepared, as we had already put the issue on the agenda at our Fire Salamander symposium in spring 2024: the establishment of a conservation breeding programme for Alpine Salamanders. The background to this is the threat to this extremely slow-reproducing high-altitude species posed by the salamander-killing fungus *Bsal*. No one could have imagined that this issue would move right to the top of our agenda just a few months later.

The incident stemmed from the seizure of 83 Alpine Salamanders in the cellar of a private collector in Hesse. All the animals were believed to have been poached in the Italian Alps. They are specimens of three extremely rare and critically endangered species or subspecies: Lanza's Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra lanzai*), Golden Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra atra aurorae*) and Pasubio Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra atra pasubiensis*).

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

Uwe Seidel, a member of the CC Advisory Board who had been called in as an expert, immediately alerted CC, stating: 'A crime has been committed here; these animals are priceless. We must act.' Uwe Seidel took immediate action and set about nursing the animals back to health, some of which were completely exhausted. In their condition, hibernation was out of the question. Each animal was housed and cared for individually; in the end, 55 specimens survived. Meanwhile, on CC's initiative, the Sachsenhagen Wildlife and Species Conservation Centre and Hanover Adventure Zoo had agreed to provide the necessary facilities. Following approval from the Lower Saxony State Agency for Water Management, Coastal Protection and Nature Conservation (NLWKN), which was responsible for the case, work could begin. The zoo prepared a basement room, whilst in Sachsenhagen, a complete breeding facility comprising 30 individual tanks was installed in a bunker using funds from CC. The former NATO bunker offers the perfect climate for keeping cold-loving species, as temperatures remain between 4–15 °C all year round.

In spring 2025, the animals were finally able to move into their new quarters. We would like to thank the colleagues responsible, who, with great enthusiasm and in close collaboration with Uwe Seidel, are working to preserve this unique treasure for species conservation, namely Florian Brandes (Sachsenhagen) as well as Robin Walb, Revin Meyer and Katja von Dörnberg (Hanover). As an expert, Uwe Seidel continues to oversee the care of the animals closely. To date, there is no reliable experience regarding the breeding of Alpine Salamanders. This makes the close collaboration within the Alpine Salamander Competence Centre all the more valuable – as does the planned involvement of Aquatis Lausanne, with its own breeding facility for the nominate subspecies, and our colleagues from Italy led by Franco Andreone, who wish to participate with additional research projects.

We've already had our first sign of success: a Lanza's Alpine Salamander was born this summer. It's a glimmer of hope, even if we can't take any credit for it, as the gestation period for Alpine Salamanders is 2–3 years. But, to quote Uwe Seidel: 'At the very least, this birth means we haven't got it all wrong.'



The confiscated Alpine Salamanders first had to be nursed back to health by CC Advisory Board member Uwe Seidel, as they were in a precarious condition. 31 of the 83 animals did not survive.

The Pasubio Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra atra pasubiensis*) now has only a few yellow spots. The range of the few hundred remaining specimens is limited to a single valley in north-western Italy.



Lanza's Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra lanzai*) is slightly larger and 'flatter' than its sister species *Salamandra atra*, but just as jet-black.



The Golden Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra atra aurorae*) is found only in a few high valleys of the northern Italian Alps and retains traces of the yellow warning colouration that the common ancestor of the Fire Salamander and the Alpine Salamander possessed.

And it is – a Lanza's Alpine Salamander. The first captive-bred offspring was born in the summer of 2025. It was conceived sometime towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, presumably in the border region between Italy and France.

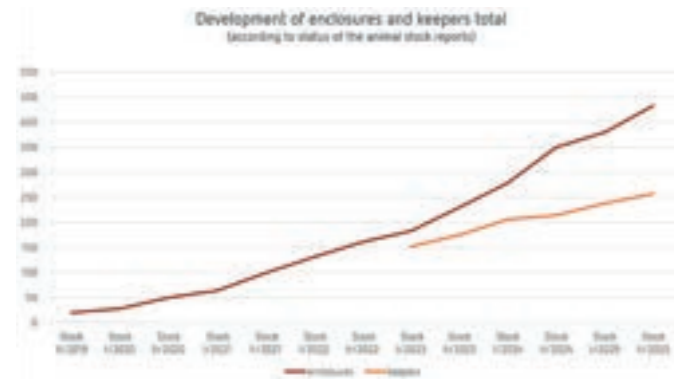


The Alpine Salamander breeding station in Sachsenhagen, funded by CC, has space for 30 breeding pairs, whilst the bunker itself can accommodate many times that number.

NEWS FROM THE PROGRAMMES

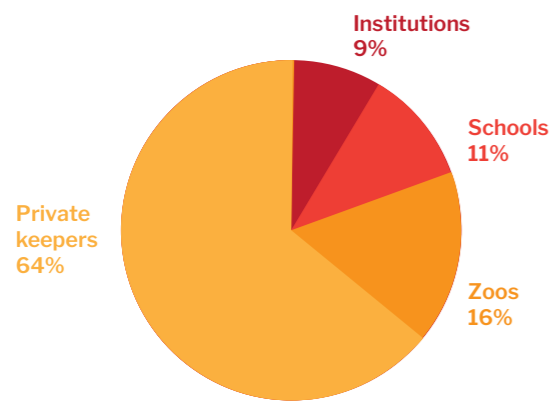
On 31 December 2025, the CC programmes were caring for 5,318 animals comprising 32 species or subspecies, looked after by 270 participants across 448 facilities. This means that the number of people participating in CC rose by 48 individuals or institutions – a welcome increase of around 22% – from 222 in 2025. The number of enclosures (one participant may look after several enclosures) even rose by 86, or around 24%, from 362.

Most CC keepers still come from German-speaking countries, but there are now also a number of keepers in other European countries.



Trends in keepers and enclosures numbers over time

Distribution by type of husbandry 2025



Distribution of animal numbers among private individuals and various institutions

Country	Enclosures
Germany	372
Austria	21
Switzerland	19
Poland	5
Sweden	5
UK	3
Netherlands	2
Czech Republic	2
Latvia	1
Belgium	1
Hungary	1
Slovenia	1

Status as at 1 November 2025 following receipt of stock reports

The number of individuals cared for or registered in CC fluctuated significantly over the course of the year: whilst there were still 5,595 animals at the end of 2024, the stock overview as at 1 May 2025 listed only 4,755, before rising again to 5,318 by the end of 2025.

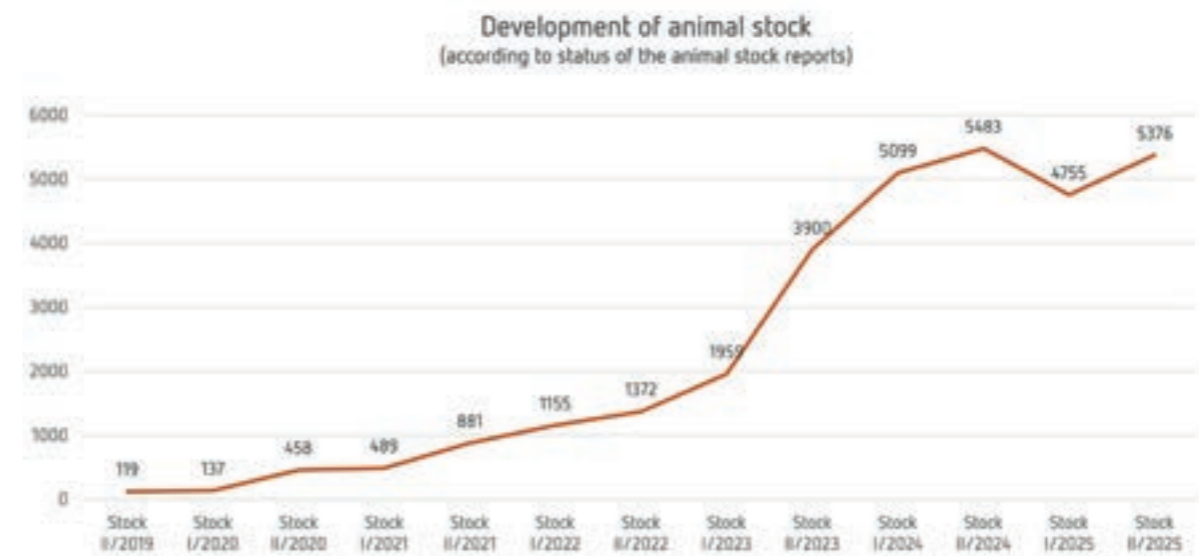
The reason for the increase is obvious: it is largely due to successful breeding programmes. The reasons for the decline, however, require further explanation. On the one hand, they lie in the high mortality rate of the very numerous larvae among so-called R-strategists: many amphibian and fish species produce an enormous number of young, often several hundred (or even a thousand) per clutch. In this case, higher losses are, so to speak, factored in by nature than with the contrasting type of K-strategists, which produce fewer young with a higher chance of survival.

Although CC generally only records offspring that can already be considered reasonably stable, there is nevertheless a higher mortality rate, for example during the metamorphosis of young amphibians or in the first few weeks afterwards. Furthermore, for technical reasons, CC also statistically records younger larvae with a higher risk of mortality when they change owner.

A second reason relates to population management: surplus animals that are not to be placed within the CC programmes are sold where possible and are therefore excluded from the CC statistics. This was also the case in 2025: a total of 918 animals were sold, generating proceeds of €7,420.90 for CC, which were then invested in our species conservation work.

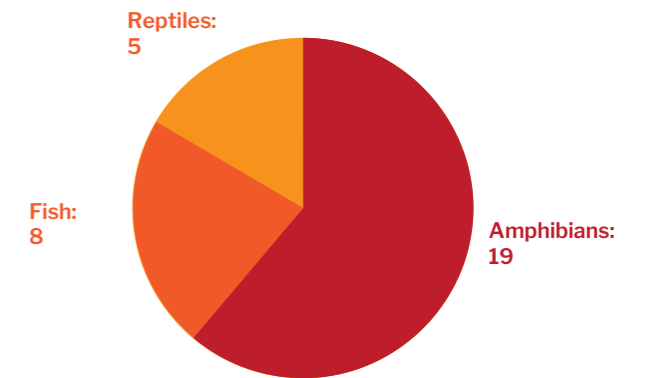
As a result, sales revenue currently accounts for a small but growing proportion of CC's funding relative to costs, and this source of funding is likely to become even more significant in the future. Only one new species was added to CC in 2025, a consequence of the consolidation phase with a 'freeze on new admissions' from the previous year. However, with the expansion of the species management team, the number of species is set to grow again in 2026, bringing to life CC's core promise to make a measurable contribution to combating species extinction.

Preparations for the inclusion of the Blue-sided Leaf Frog (*Agalychnis annae*), Vicente's Poison Frog (*Oophaga vicentei*), Sakishima Grass Lizard (*Takydromus dorsalis*) and Psychedelic Rock Gecko (*Podarcis pityuensis*) were already made in 2025.



Trends in animal numbers over time

Numbers of taxa by class 2025



Overview of the number of taxa per animal group

CITIZEN CONSERVATION

Our new addition for 2025 is Robert's Cichlid, *Limbochromis robertsi*, a highly specialised and extremely rare fish from the clear forest streams of Ghana, which is classified as 'critically endangered' on the IUCN Red List. The first 22 specimens were transferred to the aquariums of four keepers (two zoos and two private keepers) in 2025.

Breeding successes were achieved in 2025 with five of the six 'old' fish species; only Loiselle's Ptycho was not bred for management reasons. Among the reptiles, the first CC offspring were produced with the Huu Lien Tiger Gecko, and the Guimbeau's Day Gecko is also already breeding within our programme. Our Vietnamese Three-striped Box Turtles are still a long way from reaching sexual maturity. Unfortunately, breeding attempts with the Nguru Pygmy Chameleon have so far been unsuccessful; however, the sole private keeper did manage to get the animal to lay eggs; sadly, nothing hatched from the eggs, even though they were fertilised. This means that F2 breeding of the species has not yet been successful; work is also still ongoing at Schönbrunn Zoo. As for the San Francisco Garter Snakes, where the number of sexually mature animals is still very limited, no breeding has been successful so far.

The 19 amphibian programmes have essentially continued as before. The first breeding successes were recorded in 2025 with the San Martín Fringe-limbed Tree Frog, and finally also with the Demonic Poison Frog and the Phantasmal Poison Frog. Unfortunately, there has not yet been any successful breeding with the Loja Marsupial Frog, Smith's Torrent-frog and Ziegler's Crocodile Newt (spoiler: breeding of this species was, however, already successful in 2026); nor were there any further offspring for the Almanzor Fire Salamander in 2025, following initial successes in 2024.

So far, only 'cracked' by CC keeper Tobias Eisenberg: Lemur Leaf Frog
© Maximilian Koch



A breath of fresh air thanks to a new import from Guinea by CC for Smith's Torrent-frog



Golden Poison Frogs are now breeding at the Amphibium at Hanover Adventure Zoo and have also colonised the large walk-in rainforest terrarium.



Preparations to introduce the Sakishima Grass Lizard to CC began in 2025.



Programmes for the Mallorca Midwife Toad, the Vietnamese Crocodile Newt and the Lake Patzcuaro Salamander have been running for around two years now as part of the target figures scheme – the fluctuations in the calculated target achievement rate, which occasionally drops below 100%, are due to the fact that some keepers occasionally withdraw from the scheme or release animals from the CC.

With these three species, however, we are dealing with genuine population management, which means we have to actively decide which keepers should breed and which ones need to take a break. The collection of the offspring must also be planned and organised. The aim is, on the one hand, to ensure that breeding takes place regularly in as many collections as possible, so that we can truly speak of a functioning, long-term conservation breeding programme. On the other hand, there must, of course, be a viable option available for taking in the offspring produced in this way.

Breeding successes were also very encouraging for Anderson's Salamander, the Rio Pescado Harlequin Toad, the Oriental Fire-bellied Toad, native Fire Salamanders, the small Lesser Rock Skippers and the Titicaca Water Frog. These programmes are well on the way to achieving their target numbers in the foreseeable future. With the Golden Poison Frog, the breakthrough has not yet materialised as hoped, but at least several breeding successes have been achieved.

CITIZEN CONSERVATION

The Lemur Leaf Frog remains problematic, with only one private keeper regularly achieving breeding success, and the program for the Bony-headed Toad is also progressing only with difficulty following initial successes.

This is what CC-bred enclosures can look like: Terrariums at breeder Thomas Ackermann's



At Wuppertal Zoo, the first CC-bred offspring of the San Martín Fringe-limbed Tree Frog have been successfully bred.
© Claudia Philipp, Wuppertal Zoo



At the Amphibium at Hanover Adventure Zoo, native Fire Salamanders are being bred by the crateful.



Lazarus has risen again: the Rio Pescado Harlequin Toad, previously thought to be extinct, is being bred with great success at Basel Zoo, among other places.



Technical assistance with counting the fish for the stock count is strictly permitted!



The Rio Pescado Harlequin Toad



Anderson's Salamander also produced offspring again in 2025.



Mysterious and successful: target figures for the Lake Patzcuaro Salamander fluctuate by 100%.
© Janine Imhof



The Mangarahara Cichlids continue to swim briskly through the tanks of CC participants, here at NaturaGart Ibbenbüren.



The star of the most successful CC programme: Mallorca Midwife Toad
© Arne Schulze



CITIZEN CONSERVATION

ANIMAL BALANCE SHEET FROM 01.01.2025 TO 31.12.2025

Scientific name	Common name	Animals total (m,f,u)	Keepers total	Deaths (m,f,u)	External outflows	New offspring	External arrivals	Goals (animals, keepers)	Status*
Amphibians									
<i>Agalychnis lemur</i>	Lemur Leaf Frog	64 (12,8,44)	12	25 (6,3,16)	0	47	3	225, 40	29%
<i>Alytes muletensis</i>	Mallorcan Midwife Toad	805 (72,94,639)	59	326 (14,5,307)	400	280	0	425, 53	100 %
<i>Ambystoma andersoni</i>	Anderson's Salamander	101 (21,23,57)	18	45 (1,6,38)	58	82	0	225, 40	45 %
<i>Ambystoma dumerilii</i>	Lake Patzcuaro Salamander	219 (61,53,105)	33	41 (14,5,22)	82	118	0	225, 40	90 %
<i>Atelopus balios</i>	Rio Pescado Harlequin Toad	389 (38,46,305)	26	165 (3,3,159)	162	402	0	225, 32	91 %
<i>Bombina orientalis</i>	Oriental Fire-bellied Toad	389 (49,38,302)	27	45 (2,1,42)	45	143	0	225, 60	73 %
<i>Ecnomiohyla valancifer</i>	San Martín Fringe-limbed Tree Frog	44 (6,13,25)	2	7 (0,0,7)	0	19	0	225, 56	12 %
<i>Epipedobates tricolor</i>	Phantasmal Poison Frog	33 (5,2,26)	4	8 (1,2,5)	0	2	8	320, 45	10 %
<i>Gastrotheca lojana</i>	Loja Marsupial Frog	11 (5,6,0)	3	1 (0,1,0)	0	0	0	225, 38	6 %
<i>Ingerophrynus galeatus</i>	Bony-headed Toad	90 (23,9,58)	7	65 (3,2,60)	0	13	0	225, 40	29 %
<i>Minyobates steyermarki</i>	Demonic Poison Frog	55 (14,20,21)	10	12 (0,2,9)	0	1	28	110, 20	50 %
<i>Odontobatrachus smithi</i>	Smith's Torrent-frog	22 (1,2,19)	2	0	0	0	3	225, 38	8 %
<i>Phyllobates terribilis</i>	Golden Poison Frog	139 (12,19,108)	18	32 (6,2,24)	0	12	59	225, 70	44 %
<i>Salamandra sal. almanzoris</i>	Almanzor Fire Salamander	30 (10,9,11)	9	6 (4,2,0)	0	0	1	185, 30	23 %
<i>Salamandra salamandra (D)</i>	Fire Salamander (D)	353 (69,56,228)	53	21 (3,1,17)	0	81	50	330, 90	79 %
<i>Stauroids parvus</i>	Lesser Rock Skipper	234 (50,44,140)	4	4 (0,0,4)	0	16	15	500, 10	43 %
<i>Telmatobius culeus</i>	Titicaca Water Frog	98 (15,18,65)	10	4 (0,1,3)	0	8	22	225, 45	33 %
<i>Tylotriton vietnamensis</i>	Vietnamese Crocodile Newt	165 (30,49,86)	29	42 (15,16,11)	23	28	33	185, 30	93 %
<i>Tylotriton zieglerei</i>	Ziegler's Crocodile Newt	54 (18,17,19)	12	4 (2,0,2)	0	0	2	185, 30	35 %

m: male, w: female, u: undetermined sex of animals *Status = mean value of the percentage of the targeted number of animals already achieved and the target number of animals

The new addition for 2025: Robert's Cichlid © Stefan Inselmann



ANIMAL BALANCE SHEET FROM 01.01.2025 TO 31.12.2025

Scientific name	Common name	Animals total (m,f,u)	Keepers total	Deaths (m,f,u)	External outflows	New offspring	External arrivals	Goals (animals, keepers)	Status*
Fish									
<i>Bedotia madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Rainbowfish	230 (89,65,76)	15	38 (11,13,14)	0	126	12	192, 16	97 %
<i>Cyprinodon veronicae</i>	Charco Palma Pupfish	120 (22,18,80)	5	116 (39,33,44)	0	64	0	225, 16	47 %
<i>Limbochromis robertsi</i>	Robert's Cichlid	24 (13,11,0)	5	0	0	0	24	215, 16	21 %
<i>Limia islai</i>	Tiger Limia	608 (101,145,362)	21	138 (5,7,126)	0	423	0	2000, 20	65 %
<i>Parosphromenus bintan</i>	Bintan Gourami	48 (14,12,22)	6	16 (10,6,0)	0	10	15	100, 15	44 %
<i>Ptychochromis insolitus</i>	Mangarahara Cichlid	500 (54,72,374)	15	86 (3,4,79)	130	379	13	192, 16	97 %
<i>Ptychochromis loisellei</i>	Loiselle's Ptycho	228 (6,3,219)	8	140 (3,2,135)	0	0	0	192, 16	75 %
<i>Ptychochromis oligacanthus</i>	Nosy Be Cichlid	170 (35,35,100)	4	622 (4,3,613)	0	57	0	192, 16	63 %
Reptiles									
<i>Cuora cyclornata</i>	Vietnamese Three-striped Box Turtle	9 (1,2,6)	5	0	0	0	1	100, 50	10 %
<i>Goniurosaurus huuliensis</i>	Huu Lien Tiger Gecko	17 (7,7,3)	8	1 (0,1,0)	0	1	11	110, 55	15 %
<i>Phelsuma guimbeaui</i>	Guimbeau's Day Gecko	34 (8,13,13)	9	5 (0,5,0)	0	9	16	110, 55	24 %
<i>Rhampholeon acuminatus</i>	Nguru Pygmy Chameleon	10 (5,5,0)	2	11 (7,4,0)	0	0	0	215, 36	5 %
<i>Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia</i>	San Francisco Garter Snake	25 (13,10,2)	7	6 (3,3,0)	0	0	12	110, 28	24 %

m: male, w: female, u: undetermined sex of animals *Status = mean value of the percentage of the targeted number of animals already achieved and the target number of animals



The Titicaca Water Frogs are striving to get closer to the target numbers.



Unfortunately not yet bred into the F2 generation: Nguru Pygmy Chameleon



The first CC offspring of the Huu Lien Tiger Gecko © Denis Petzenhauser



We are eagerly awaiting the first CC offspring of the San Francisco Garter Snake © Martin Hallmen

PRESENTATIONS & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, CONFERENCES

2025 was not only a highly politicised year in general; for CC, too, the socio-political dimension came sharply into focus amid the debates surrounding whitelists and the keeping of wild animals.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The One Plan Approach, which brings together all in-situ and ex situ species conservation measures, can only succeed if both pillars enjoy public support. CC also sees it as an important task to promote support for, or at the very least acceptance of, both institutional and private ex situ wildlife management. This is no sure-fire success, given a public that is, in some quarters, highly critical of zoos and wildlife keeping and, at least in part, seeks to regulate wildlife keeping much more strictly or ban it altogether.

A popular approach to this is the use of so-called 'positive lists' or whitelists, which legally stipulate which animal species may be kept privately. We consider this approach to be misguided and dangerous, as it would likely severely restrict or even completely prevent the private keeping of unknown and endangered species based on biological findings – and could thus not only bring an end to a project such as CC, but also deprive society of one of its most promising opportunities to expand capacities for ex situ species conservation. That is why CC is actively engaging in the political discourse on this issue.

Hardly any major debate – now including those at European level – takes place without reference to CC as a positive example of harnessing civil society's potential for species conservation. In this context, particular mention should be made of Björn Encke's participation in the workshop on the EU study 'Reframing exotic pet trade in Europe' on 28 October in Brussels, where possible legislative initiatives to regulate the breeding of wild animals were discussed. One point of particular interest to us was the call to form a broad coalition of the willing to 1) influence public perception of amphibian and reptile keeping, 2) shift the trade more towards captive-bred animals rather than wild-caught specimens, 3) ensure greater transparency in trade and breeding, and 4) steer private wildlife keeping more towards species conservation.

We share these goals. And with Citizen Conservation and our wildlife online platform Wild at Home, we can make an important contribution to their implementation.

The EU has also commissioned a study on positive lists, with RPA Europe acting as the contractor. Initial findings were presented to interested stakeholders on 10 June 2025 during an online conference, which Heiko Werning attended on behalf of CC. Unfortunately, RPA Europe's presentations were highly biased and, in some cases, factually incorrect, a point raised by numerous participants even during the event. To provide a written response to this, CC has endorsed a statement issued by the Federal Association for Professional Nature and Species Conservation (BNA) on 18 June 2025, in which the questionable claims are discussed. Our participation in parliamentary evenings and political networking events – such as those organised by VdZ, ZZF and Loro Parque in Berlin on this topic – also falls within this important area.

In a statement issued in October, CC publicly opposed bans on keeping dangerous animals in North Rhine-Westphalia, arguing that venomous snakes and other such creatures are also endangered species worthy of protection, many of which will depend on ex situ conservation efforts. The statement was prompted by the debate surrounding the extension or revision of the 'Act on the Protection of the Public against Highly Venomous Animals' in North Rhine-Westphalia.

CC is also involved in the technical debate surrounding the establishment of conservation breeding programmes. In June 2025, following years of work and discussion, the 'Vienna Guidelines' on the 'One Plan Approach for Conservation Breeding Projects for Threatened Aquatic Species' were published. The initiative originated with the Haus des Meeres in Vienna, the Association of German Aquarium and Terrarium Societies (VDA), the Austrian Association for Vivaristics and Ecology (ÖVVÖ), the Munich State Zoological Collection, the Bavarian State Institute for Agriculture and the German Killifish Society (DKG). CC has been involved in the development of this initiative since the first workshop on the subject in October 2022.



Meeting with CC advisory board members at the ZZF's 'Wir und das Tier' (Us and Animals) political dialogue conference: Heiko Werning, Volker Ennenbach, Stefan Hetz and Tina Nagorzanski



Two managing directors, a commitment to better wildlife management, but opposed to positive lists: Martin Singheiser (BNA) and Björn Encke at the workshop in Brussels



Part of the political work: Participation in the associations' forum on the National Biodiversity Strategy

OUTREACH AND NETWORKING

It was undoubtedly a special honour that Leipzig Zoo invited CC's Managing Director, Björn Encke, to give a speech at the reopening of the completely refurbished historic terrarium, dating from 1913, on 26 September. Leipzig Zoo contributes to CC by housing several species and is one of our funding partners, and an information board in the new terrarium now also draws visitors' attention to CC.

Apart from that, the CC team has taken part in numerous specialist events and conferences to network with other stakeholders in species conservation and to present our project to a specialist audience. Particularly noteworthy here is the 21st seminar on 'Animal Welfare in Circuses and Zoos' at Leipzig Zoo, where Björn Encke presented CC to an audience of official veterinarians and other representatives of authorities and experts professionally involved in animal welfare, sparking a lively discussion. Many official veterinarians in particular, who in their day-to-day work often experience only the negative aspects of private wildlife keeping, were impressed by the positive aspects that CC was able to present.

Also worth noting is the participation of CC curator Johannes Penner in the taxonomic working group for amphibians and reptiles of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), which met at the Allwetterzoo Münster from 12 to 15 May. Johannes has also taken part in several meetings and events relating to Fire Salamanders in order to facilitate professional exchange for this CC priority project.

It goes without saying that we were also present, in various configurations, at the annual conferences of our members and partner associations VdZ, DGHT, DTG, EAZA, ÖGH and ZGAP. Whilst attending events is undoubtedly resource-intensive, it is an indispensable part of CC's work – both for general networking, which is of vital importance for a collaborative organisation such as ours, and for acquiring new supporters and sponsors. It is often only through direct engagement, first-hand information from talks and getting to know people personally that particularly knowledgeable private individuals, as well as institutional representatives, can be persuaded to get involved with CC.

A special occasion: Björn Encke gave a speech at the reopening of the terrarium in Leipzig



Björn Encke at the VdZ conference in Berlin



Tina Nagorzanski and Anton Weissenbacher at the VDA Species Conservation Conference in Thannhausen, Bavaria

Vanessa Dubberke presents 'Wild at Home' at the DTG Annual Conference in Wolgast, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.



Selfie time at the DGHT Annual Conference at the Museum Koenig in Bonn: Björn Encke and Julia Bindl on a mission for CC



Informal CC Advisory Board meeting at the EAZA conference in Łódź



'Meet the expert' Johannes Penner – at the SDG Erasmus Café in Kronberg, Hesse



CC's first major appearance: Julia Bindl at Lerchenfeld Grammar School in Hamburg

Group photo of the VdZ Species Conservation Working Group at the Thuringian Zoopark in Erfurt with Johannes Penner and Julia Bindl



Reading from the CC bestseller 'Von Okapi, Scharnierschildkröte und Schnilch – ein prekäres Bestiarium' with Ulrike Sterblich and Heiko Werning at the Adolf Reichwein Library in Berlin-Schmargendorf. Among the audience: a Guimbeau's Day Gecko from CC, library director Sascha Mader and Tobias Kohl, managing director of Stiftung Artenschutz.



Dates for 2025 | Events & Conferences

23 January | Johannes Penner at the ÖGH conference in Vienna, including a coordination meeting on Fire Salamander projects
26 January | Björn Encke giving a CC presentation at 'Conservation Day' at Aquatis Lausanne
2 February | Johannes Penner at the 'Saxon Fire Salamander Symposium' in Dresden
16 February | Tina Nagorzanski giving a talk at the Berlin Godeiden Group
17 March | Björn Encke guides participants at the spring conference of the ZZF specialist group 'Pet Wholesale and Breeding' through the Amphibium at Hanover Adventure Zoo
25 March | Heiko Werning giving a CC talk in Güstrow at the conference 'Natterjack and European Green Toads in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania'
28 March | Heiko Werning at the ZGAP Annual Conference in Stuttgart
28 March | Johannes Penner at a Fire Salamander gathering in the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park
2-4 April | Vanessa Dubberke and Björn Encke gave a talk on CC and 'Wild at Home' at the DTG conference in Wolgast
15 April | Johannes Penner gave a talk on CC at the SDG Erasmus Café for Sustainable Development in Kronberg as part of the 'Meet the expert' series
16 April | Julia Bindl at the ZZF and IVH press conference 'Development of the pet market in Germany' in Berlin
8 May | Johannes Penner at Nuremberg Zoo with a talk on 'Endangered amphibians and reptiles - and how to help them'
8-9 May | Björn Encke at the '21st Seminar on Animal Welfare in Circuses and Zoos' at Leipzig Zoo
12-15 May | Johannes Penner at the EAZA-TAG Amphibians & Reptiles meeting at Münster Allwetterzoo
14 May | Heiko Werning & Tina Nagorzanski at the ZZF's 'Wir fürs Tier' political dialogue conference in Berlin
15 May | Vanessa Dubberke and Julia Bindl at the meeting of the VdZ Species Conservation Working Group at Augsburg Zoo
18 June | The whole CC team at the Zoo and Wildlife Forum as part of the VdZ Annual Conference in Berlin
19 June | Björn Encke and Heiko Werning at the VdZ Annual Conference in Berlin
1 July | Björn Encke at the 'Rhein-Ruhr Trade Species Conservation Information Meeting' at the Lower Nature Conservation Authority in Cologne

4-6 July | Tina Nagorzanski at the VDA Species Conservation Conference in Thannhausen
17 July | Julia Bindl giving a talk at the charity run at Lerchenfeld Grammar School in Hamburg for Citizen Conservation and children with cancer
3-7 September | Julia Bindl, Vanessa Dubberke & Björn Encke at the DGHT Annual Conference at the Museum Koenig in Bonn
4 September | Johannes Penner at the Fire Salamander Symposium at Bielefeld University
9 September | Björn Encke & Johannes Penner at the EAZA Annual Conference in Łódź, Poland
24 September | Björn Encke, Vanessa Dubberke & Heiko Werning at the '10 Years of the VdZ Office' anniversary evening in Berlin
25 September | Björn Encke & Heiko Werning at the BfN's 'Garden Talks' at Berlin Zoo
26 September | Björn Encke & Heiko Werning at the opening of the terrarium at Leipzig Zoo
24-26 September | Julia Bindl & Tina Nagorzanski at the DTG Species Conservation Seminar at Nordhorn Zoo
15 October | Björn Encke gave a talk at the Friends of Leipzig Zoo
27-28 October | Björn Encke attended the workshop on the EU study 'Reframing the exotic pet trade in Europe' in Brussels
1 November | Björn Encke gave an online talk at the conference of the DGHT's Amphibian and Reptile Diseases Working Group
1 November | Johannes Penner at the final conference of the 'Fire Salamanders in Hesse' project in Gießen
15 November | Johannes Penner gives a talk on CC and West Africa at the DGHT Kurpfalz regional group at the Reptilium Landau
18 November | Heiko Werning and Ulrike Sterblich read from The 'Precarious Bestiary' at the Adolf Reichwein Library in Berlin-Schmargendorf
22-24 November | Tina Nagorzanski gives a talk at the 'Animal' trade fair in Sindelfingen
25 November | Johannes Penner at the Heidelberg Zoo's lecture series on CC and Fire Salamanders
25 November | Heiko Werning at the Loro Parque Parliamentary Evening in Berlin
27 November | Björn Encke at the National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) Association Forum in Berlin
28 November | Julia Bindl & Johannes Penner at the VdZ Research & Species Conservation Working Groups at Erfurt Zoo

SPECIES CONSERVATION, MONTH BY MONTH

No fewer than two calendars supported CC: Sera, a company active in the aquarium accessories sector, among other things, publishes an annual calendar, the proceeds from the sale of which go towards species conservation projects. CC was among the beneficiaries for the 2025 edition and is delighted to have received a donation of €5,600.

To generate direct donations for CC, we had a neat little CC calendar produced at the end of the year featuring species illustrations by our graphic designer Jonas Lieberknecht, which we sent out as a thank-you for donations of 25 euros or more. After all, this raised €1,411, and what's more, the monthly drawings of our main characters now remind not only the donors of CC for a whole year, but also the Advisory Board members and other deserving supporters, to whom we hope we have been able to bring a little joy in this way.

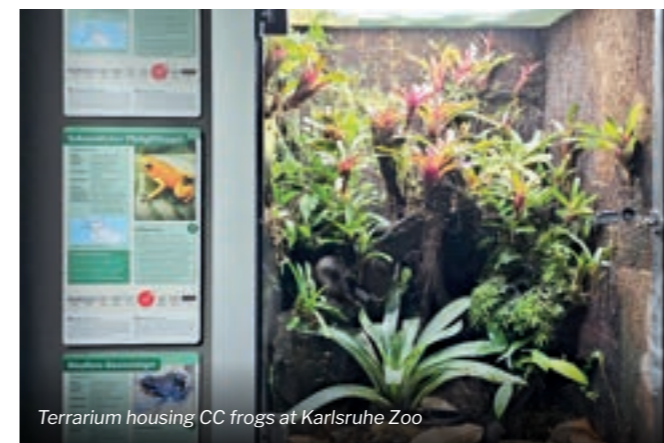
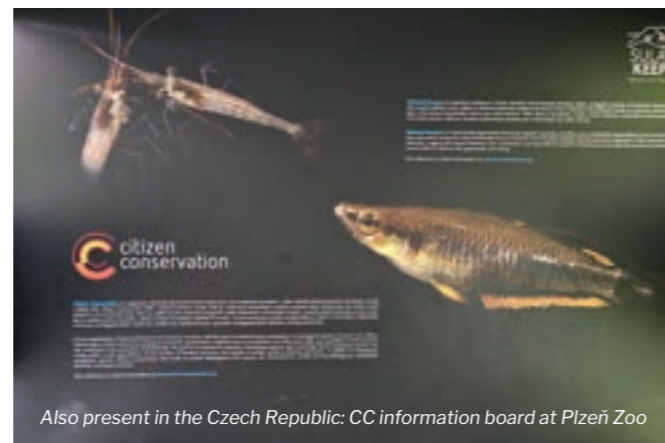


The first CC calendar was also promoted in the specialist publications 'elaphe', 'Reptilia' and 'Datz'.

DECENTRALISED YET EVERYWHERE

Around 40 million people visit the VdZ zoos alone every year. Added to this are the visitors to the numerous smaller animal parks, aquariums and wildlife reserves. Each of these facilities can become a 'point of sale' for CC if they care for animals from our conservation breeding programmes and highlight this fact.

There are numerous ways to present this information, ranging from a small note on the animal sign to information boards and screens, or the distribution of materials. Here are a few examples.



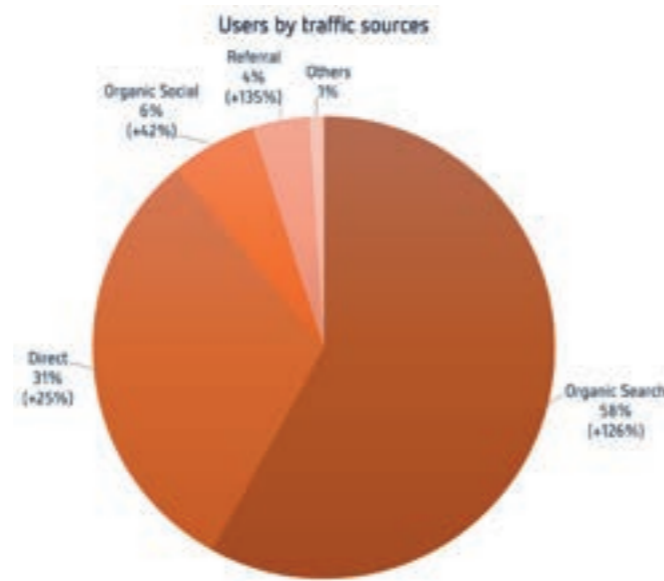
WEBSITE

Citizen Conservation's website, which was launched last year, was further developed in 2025 and expanded to include an FAQ page featuring 45 questions, where website visitors and interested parties can find information on the key topics relating to CC – including ex situ species conservation, population management, CC species, participation in CC, and veterinary aspects.

In addition, 14 news articles and five species pages were published. With 17,549 users (+72%) and 43,453 page views (+17%), citizen-conservation.org achieved its best results to date. The strongest month was November, followed by December and October – driven by media coverage and campaigns centred on the Alpine Salamander.

The pages 'CC Species' (4,371 views) and 'Becoming a breeder' (2,087) remained particularly popular, alongside English-language content such as the project page on the Fire Salamander. The distribution shifted in favour of international visitors – the USA (+264%) and China (+1,150%) recorded the largest increases compared to 2024. Organic search traffic increased by over 120%, which is primarily attributable to improved SEO performance (+490% clicks according to Google Search Console) and enhanced visibility in image search.

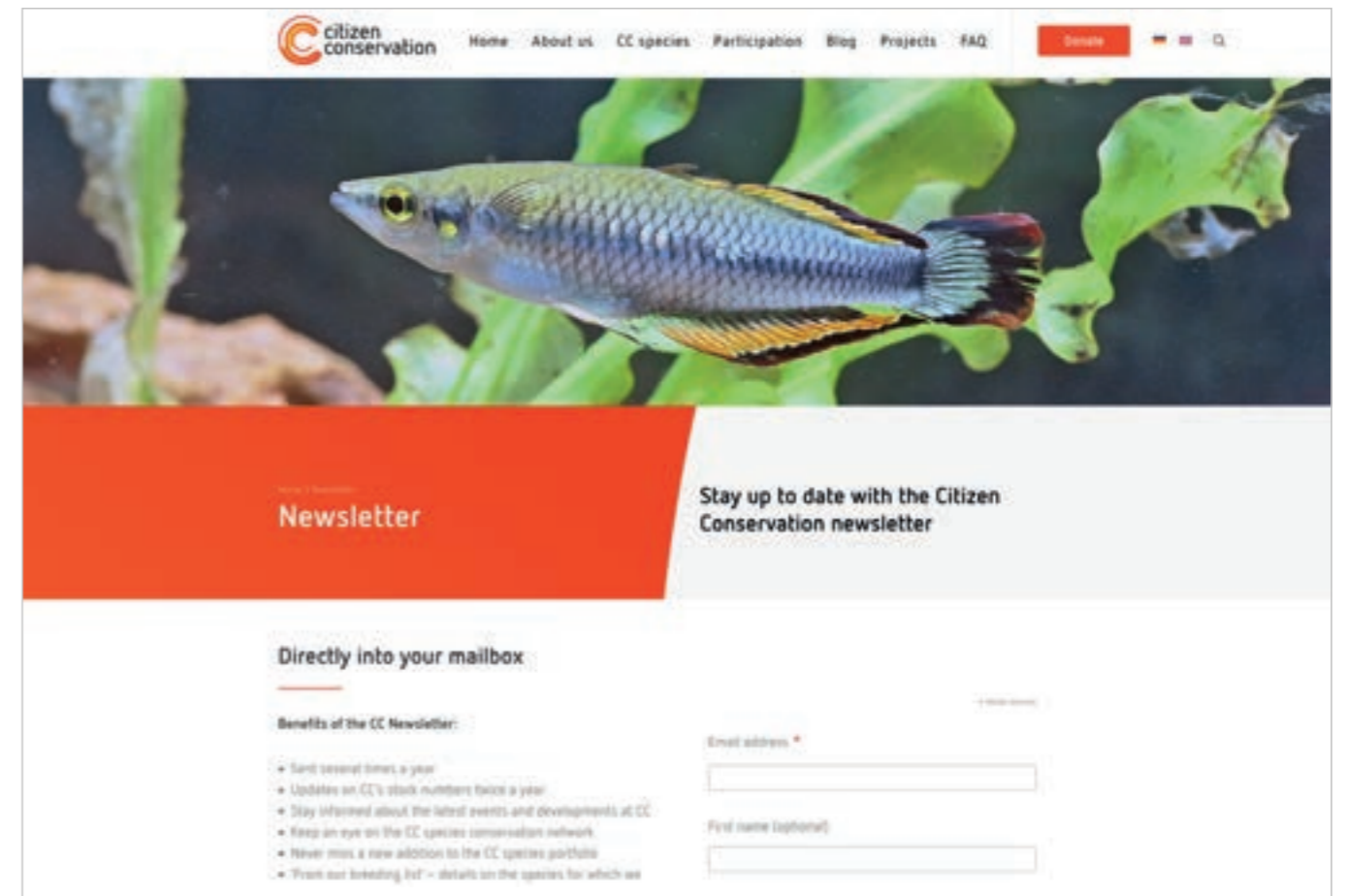
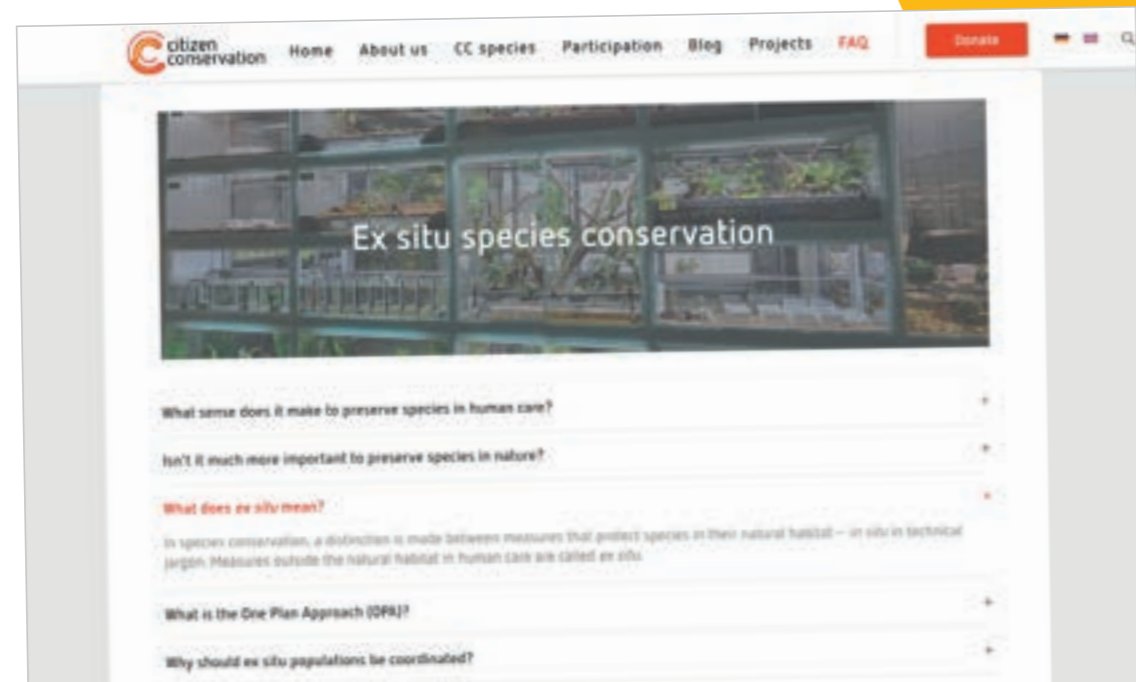
The site architecture and usability also improved, particularly as a result of the responsive redesign. Desktop usage rose to 51%, leading to a moderate increase in time spent on site. Although the engagement rate fell slightly, this trend suggests that more visitors are arriving at the website via search engines, searching specifically for information and clicking away less frequently – a typical pattern of successful SEO work.



We saw a 124% increase in users arriving via search engines compared to the previous year. Google Image Search also drove new visitors to CC's content.



The new FAQ page not only addresses questions about organising and participating in CC, but also covers the topics of species conservation and conservation breeding in general.



Website visitors can sign up for our newsletter via the new landing page.

NEWSLETTER

In 2025, we sent out two regular newsletters to our subscribers, in both German and English. When sending out the first newsletter, we again encountered delivery issues, just as we had when sending out the newsletter in November 2024. With the help of Mailchimp support – the service provider we use to send the newsletters – this problem was finally resolved. Nevertheless, we had to send the first newsletter of 2025 twice: once to the entire mailing list, which resulted in a bounce rate of 21.4%, and then in a second round to all those who had previously bounced. The open rate for both newsletters ranged from 29.2% (1st newsletter) to 40.3% (2nd newsletter). The click-through rate shows a similar trend: from 13.4% to 21.1%. The average open rate is therefore 34.8%, and the click-through rate 17.3% – the click-through rate is thus significantly higher than the average achieved by other charitable organisations (3.3%), whilst the open rate is lower (40%).

The first English newsletter was sent to eleven people, the second to 14 (here too, the first newsletter had to be sent out twice). The average open rate was 38.7% and the click-through rate was 24.4%.

In June 2025, we published a dedicated landing page for the newsletter on the CC website, making it easier for visitors to find the newsletter. By the end of 2025, the German newsletter had thus reached 417 subscribers (+16.4%). A separate English version of the newsletter has only been sent out since 2024 – the 14 subscribers joined in 2025.

FIRST OFFICIAL CC PARTICIPANTS' NEWSLETTER

In 2025, an exclusive newsletter was sent out for the first time, exclusively to CC participants, providing them with a round-up of CC news and milestones. We also used the newsletter to share information about the breeding successes and, in this way, to directly seek out interested parties who would like to take care of our young fish, amphibians and reptiles. The newsletter was sent out in German and English.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2025, Citizen Conservation significantly expanded its online community and gained greater visibility. The focus was on strengthening links with zoological partners, particularly through joint video projects and Reels about the Alpine Salamander Centre of Competence, which were posted on Facebook and Instagram as a collaboration with Hanover Adventure Zoo and the Sachsenhagen Wildlife and Species Conservation Centre, as well as on YouTube.

FACEBOOK

On Facebook, the number of followers rose to 2,370 (+21%), reach climbed to 154,000 (+340%) and content interactions increased by 88% to 12,044 – a record figure. The most-viewed post (with a reach of over 32,000) focused on the Alpine Salamander Centre of Competence in Sachsenhagen. Reports on advisory board member Lukas Reese and media links (Focus, reasonstobecheerful) also generated significant spikes in engagement.



CC Managing Director Björn Encke, salamander expert Uwe Seidel and Florian Brandes, Head of the Sachsenhagen Wildlife and Species Conservation Centre, provided information in the Reels about their joint rescue of Alpine Salamanders. The Reels garnered 84,000 views on Facebook and 56,000 on Instagram. On YouTube, they were viewed 5,900 times.

INSTAGRAM

On Instagram, we focused on organic growth through creative Reels and collaborations. 2,134 followers (+39%) and 72,700 accounts reached (+200%) confirm the success of this strategy. Short videos about visits to the zoo and Alpine Salamanders proved particularly successful, with some achieving a reach of over 70,000.



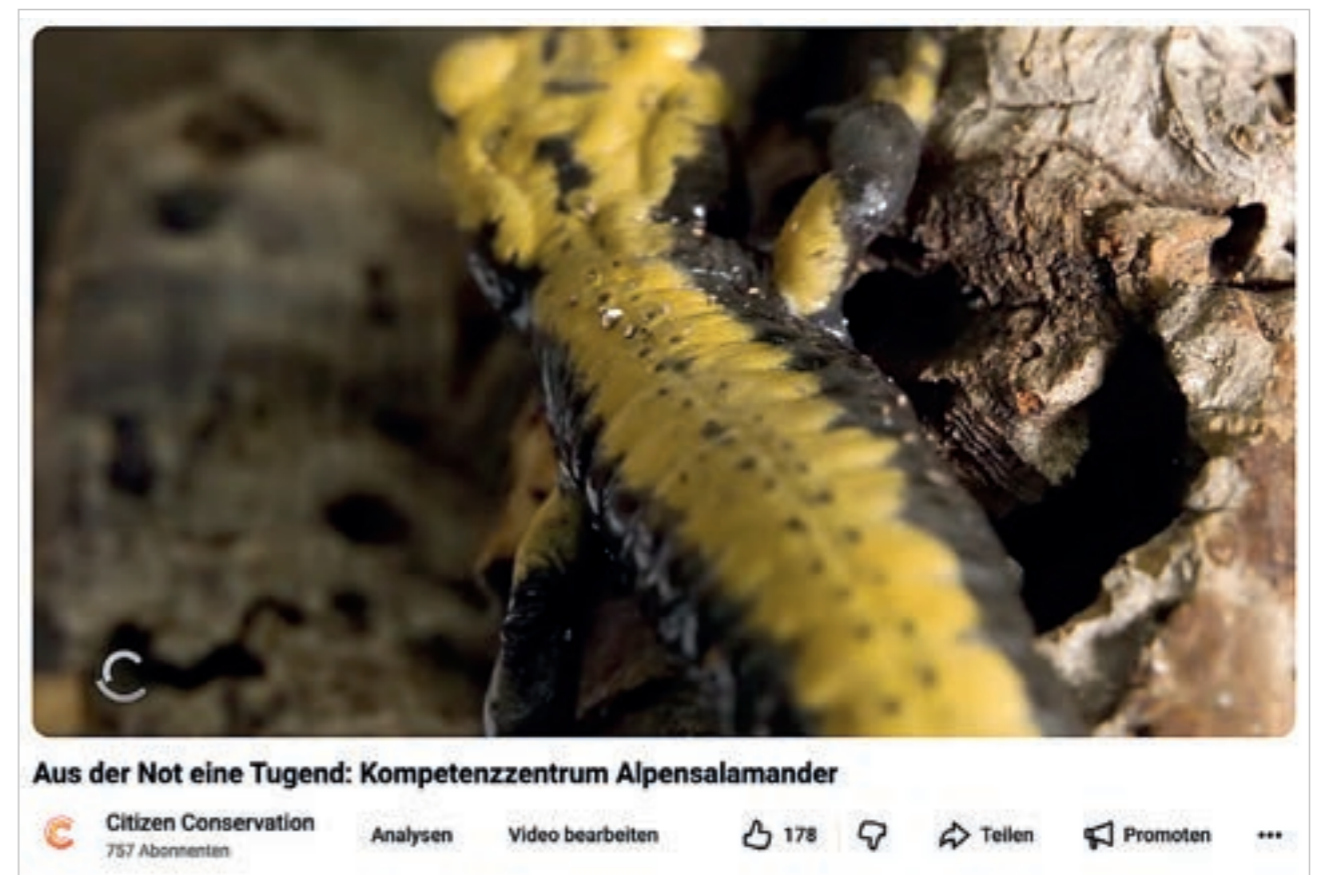
The announcement of Lukas Reese as a new member of the CC Advisory Board was posted on Facebook at the start of the year and was promptly shared by his employer, the Zoologischer Stadtgarten Karlsruhe. The post reached 18,000 users, making it one of the top three posts on CC's Facebook page.

LINKEDIN

On LinkedIn, reach grew moderately to 4,847 impressions (+28%), whilst the number of followers rose to 165 (+85%). The high engagement rate per post (+450% reactions) shows that Citizen Conservation is increasingly gaining recognition among the specialist audience on LinkedIn.

YOUTUBE

YouTube saw a significant upturn: 15,944 views (+154%) and a 30% increase in watch time (534 hours). The video 'Making the best of a bad situation – Alpine Salamander Competence Centre' performed particularly well, with over 4,400 views and an exceptionally long watch time. The channel has thus established itself as a key component of public relations work for target groups interested in species conservation.



With a video and six short films focusing on the Alpine Salamander project, Citizen Conservation's YouTube channel was once again put to good use as a platform. The video 'Making the best of a bad situation', published in November, garnered almost 4,500 views and a watch time of 215 hours.

PRESS REVIEW

A PROFOUND IMPACT THROUGH LOCAL ACTORS

In 2025, too, there was no capacity for a large-scale PR campaign on ex situ species conservation, yet CC was mentioned 84 times in various media outlets (as far as we were able to ascertain).

There is no doubt that television programmes achieve the widest reach, as they can also be accessed afterwards via the broadcasters' video-on-demand services. In episode 1116 of the popular MDR zoo documentary series 'Elephant, Tiger & Co.' about Leipzig Zoo, the zoo's involvement in the CC conservation breeding programme for Anderson's Salamander was featured, whilst 'Lokalzeit Bergisches Land' on WDR television reported on the Remscheid CC Fire Salamander project, and the Lower Saxony local editorial team at SAT 1 reported on the Hanover Adventure Zoo's involvement in the ex situ breeding of Fire Salamanders.

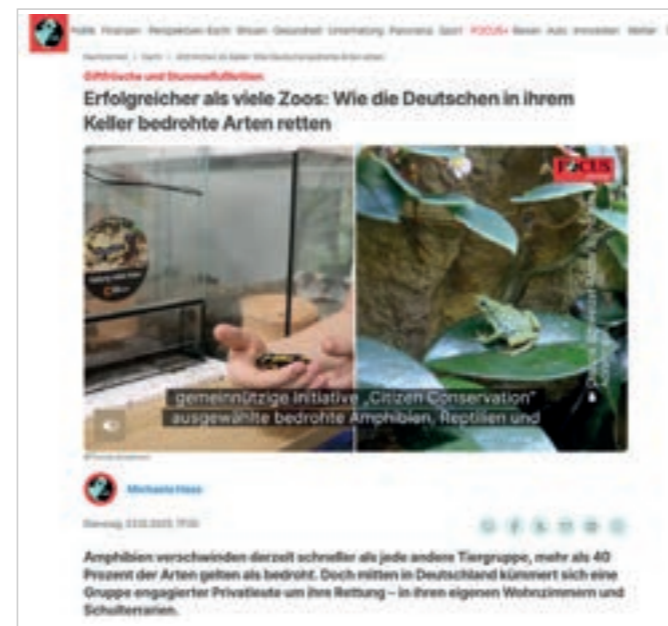
CC staff members appeared on the radio on two occasions: on RBB's radio eins, Heiko Werning was once again asked about our book 'Von Okapi, Scharnierschildkröte und Schnilch – ein prekäres Bestiarium' (three years after its publication!), whilst Tina Nagorzanski spoke about CC's objectives on the 'Im Gespräch' programme on Deutschlandfunk Kultur. Three podcasts also covered our project: Björn Encke answered questions on 'MyFish', the podcast series by ZOOM Gelsenkirchen dedicated an episode to the Vietnamese Crocodile Newt, and the ARD climate editorial team covered the efforts to protect Fire Salamanders in detail.

Most articles about CC appear in the local media, partly in traditional printed local newspapers – always including their digital editions – but also frequently on the numerous purely regional websites.

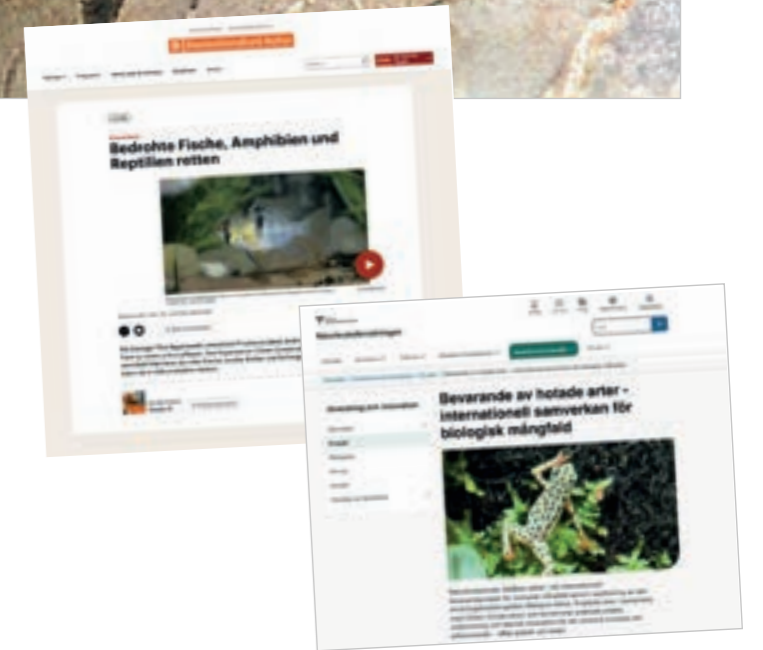
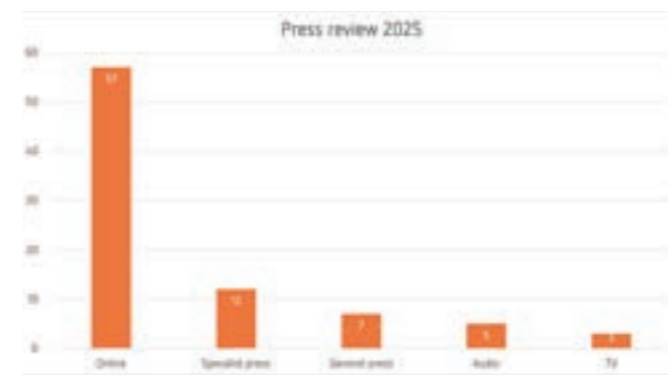
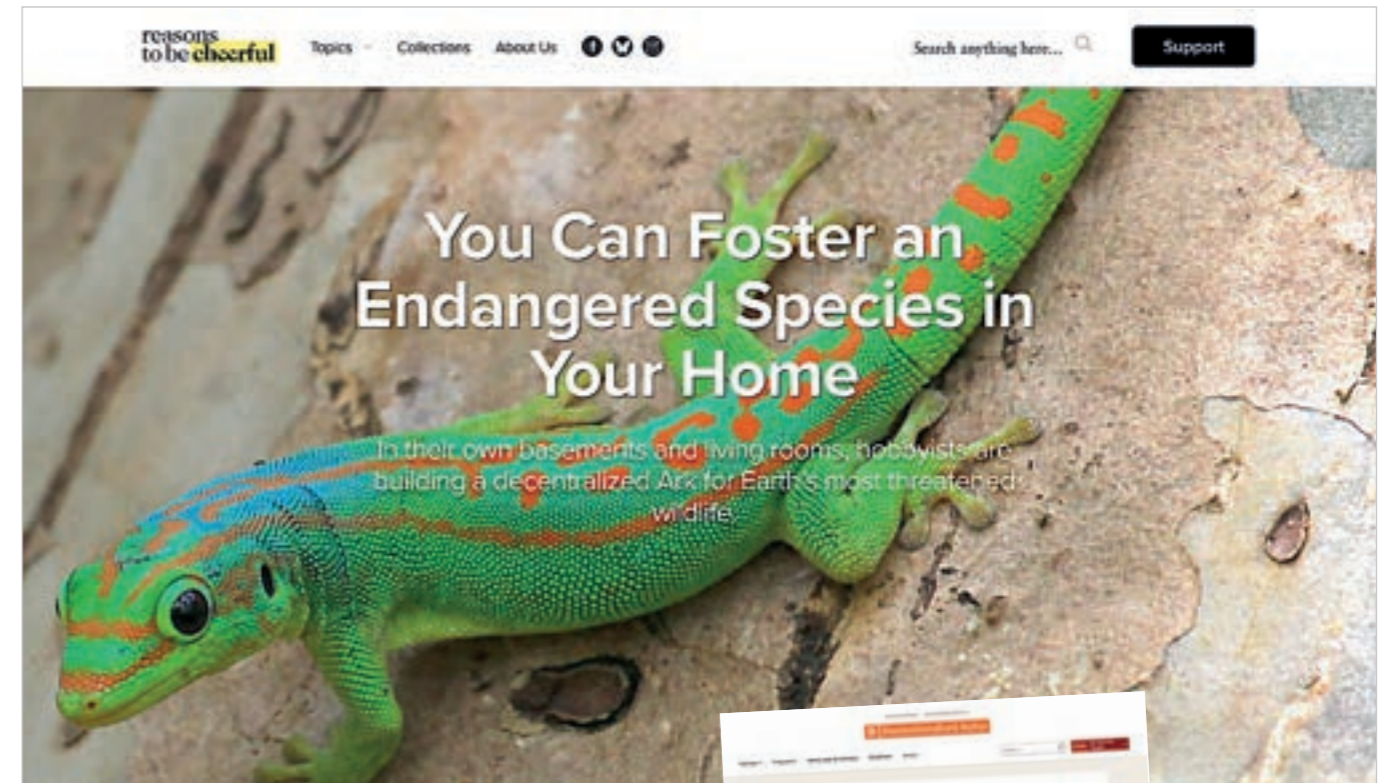
This demonstrates the far-reaching impact of CC's approach: the trigger is often the involvement of a zoo, a school or a private keeper in one of our species programmes. Such short stories featuring a specific animal species and a local institution or individual fit very well into the framework of local reporting, particularly against the backdrop of 'helping to save an endangered species'. Around 30 articles fall into this category. CC's prominent position, highlighted by Björn Encke's opening speech at the reopening of the terrarium at Leipzig Zoo, also led to some media coverage.

In addition, there are the statements made by the participants and partners involved, who refer to their participation in or support of CC on their websites and in their publications.

In the national (online) press, the most significant piece was a very fine and thoroughly researched profile of CC by journalist Michaela Haas, which appeared in English in the online magazine 'reasons to be cheerful' and in German on 'Focus Online'. Although the very detailed article presents (almost) all the facts well-researched, the fly in the ointment is the Focus headline, presumably chosen by the editorial team in a clickbaiting style: 'More successful than many zoos: How Germans are saving endangered species in their basements'. Yet the very idea behind CC – as correctly described in the article – is precisely the cooperation between zoos and private keepers, not competition. Our request for a change was even granted, so that the article now appears in Google's search results with the new, more accurate headline: '400 toads in the cellar: How Germans are saving endangered species'. On the Focus website itself, however, the old headline remains. But such are the rules: anyone in the public eye must accept that the media will report on them and choose the form of that coverage themselves. The value of this freedom of the press naturally outweighs the occasional minor annoyance.



Despite its annoying clickbait headline – 'More successful than many zoos: How Germans are saving endangered species in their basements' –, this is a well-researched article about CC on Focus Online – which has brought us a few new keepers.



ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STATUTORY OBJECTIVES

During the 2025 reporting period, activities in the online sector (digital services and ongoing editorial operations) continued. These activities are in line with our primary statutory objective of promoting EDUCATION AND PUBLIC ENLIGHTENMENT in accordance with Section 52 (2), first sentence, No. 7 of the General Tax Code (AO).

The contribution made as a shareholder of Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH constitutes a contribution by Frogs & Friends towards the promotion of science and research, as well as nature conservation and environmental protection, in its capacity as a fundraising organisation within the meaning of Section 58 (1) of the German Fiscal Code (AO). Indirectly, the commitment to Citizen Conservation thus also fulfils the statutory objectives of promoting ANIMAL BREEDING pursuant to Section 52 (2), first sentence, No. 23 of the German Fiscal Code (AO), NATURE and ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION pursuant to Section 52 (2), first sentence, No. 8 AO and ANIMAL WELFARE pursuant to Section 52 (2), sentence 1, No. 14 AO – as well as the objective of promoting CIVIC ENGAGEMENT pursuant to Section 52 (2), sentence 1, No. 25 AO for the benefit of the aforementioned purposes.

In Guinea, the association took over the monitoring of the Nimba Toad in 2025 and established the first local facilities for keeping amphibians. In addition, an expert report was commissioned on the impact of mining activities in the region on the populations of this highly endangered species. This commitment by the association thus serves the objective of promoting DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION in accordance with Section 52 (2) No. 15 of the German General Tax Code (AO). Consequently, all five of the association's statutory objectives were pursued during the reporting period.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The existing strategic objectives will be retained. In the exhibition area, work has continued on a monitoring terrarium for frogs and toads for the purposes of behavioural research and communication. Another priority is the expansion of our collaborations and partnerships in Central and West Africa. Establishing our own breeding and research facility in Germany would be a key step towards, on the one hand, permanently fulfilling a bridging role between ex situ and in situ species conservation. On the other hand, it would usefully complement the work on developing CC over the coming years.



Visit to Berlin by our Guinean partner, Dr Joseph Doumbia. The dinner we shared had a distinctly Nimba flavour, thanks to the presence of Dr Marvin Schäfer (University of Bielefeld) and Dr Laura Sandberger-Loua (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin).

FINANCIAL REPORT 2025

In the 2025 financial year, income amounted to €503,364.78, whilst expenditure stood at €461,891.75.

The personnel support provided by Frogs & Friends to CC amounted to €112,899.22. In addition, €25,000 was provided under the grant agreement. This resulted in a total grant from F&F to CC of €137,899.22 in 2025.

In 2025, around €110,000, including personnel costs, was invested in the development of the 'Wild at Home' wildlife database. This made Wild at Home, alongside Citizen Conservation, the main project of the year in terms of expenditure.

INCOME STATEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 4 (3) ESTG AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

Operating income	€503,364.78
Turnover	€28,183.62
Donations & Sponsorships	€450,956.00
Grants	€10,000.00
Other operating income	€13,085.16
Value added tax	€1,140.00
Operating charges	€461,891.75
Staff costs, total social security contributions	€259,973.80
Taxes, insurance, contributions, KSK, non-deductible VAT	€23,933.52
Advertising/travel expenses	€8,054.21
Project expenses: Wild at Home, Citizen Conservation, Editorial, Nimba, Filmterrarium, Amphibium, Fire Salamander Bielefeld	€157,641.47
Depreciation	€2,393.87
Other operating charges	€9,138.36
Input value added tax	€899.10
Value added tax	€-142.58
Result	€41,473.03

Pregnant female Nimba Toad



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2025 (AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025)

ASSETS	EUR	LIABILITIES	EUR
A. Fixed assets		A. Shareholders' equity	
Property, plant and equipment	€277.00	Share capital	€25,000.00
		Retained earnings brought forward	€120,573.12
		Net income for the year	€2,773.03
B. Current assets		B. Creditors	
Debtors and other assets	€7,387.63	Other creditors	€4,185.15
Cash at bank and in hand, postal giro and central bank balances, cheques	€144,866.67		
Total ASSETS	€152,531.30	Total LIABILITIES	€152,531.30

The share capital contributions of the three shareholders, F&F (€9,375 = 37.5%), VdZ (€9,375 = 37.5%) and DGHT (€6,250 = 25%), totalling €25,000, are held in CC's instant access savings account, as is a reserve of €75,018.41. As at 31 December 2025, the current account held a balance of €44,809.49, whilst the CC PayPal account held a balance of €38.77 (carryover 31 December 2025/2 January 2026). In total, CC's liquidity as at 31 December 2025 thus amounted to **€144,866.67**.



The Alpine Salamander enclosure at the Sachsenhagen Wildlife and Species Conservation Centre, funded by CC.

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT 1 JANUARY 2025 TO 31 DECEMBER 2025

	EUR	EUR
Operating income		
Grants		€230,000.00
Donations, sponsorships		€16,344.90
Sales revenue		€9,249.33
Other operating income		€418.79
Total operating income		€256,013.02
Operating charges		
Staff costs		€156,416.61
Depreciation		€833.76
Other operating expenses		€95,989.62
Insurance, contributions, KSK	€7,253.35	
Cost contribution to the 'Wild at Home' database	€10,000.00	
Advertising and travel expenses, conferences	€22,773.71	
Animal procurement, transfers and veterinary medicine	€5,727.16	
Alpine Salamander Sachsenhagen	€9,252.12	
Production, editorial work, websites	€19,016.48	
Miscellaneous operating costs	€14,891.00	
Non-deductible input tax	€7,075.80	
Total operating charges		€253,239.99
Earnings after taxes		€2,773.03
Profit for the financial year		€2,773.03

In the 2025 financial year, operating income of €256,013.02 was offset by operating charges of €253,239.99. The net profit for the year amounts to €2,773.03.

Not shown in the balance sheet and profit and loss account are the personnel contributions under the management agreement and the grant agreement between Frogs & Friends and CC. The personnel contributions provided by Frogs & Friends for CC amounted to €112,899.22. Consequently, the actual expenditure for Citizen Conservation in the 2025 reporting year totals **€366,139.21**.

OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

In accordance with Article 2.3 of the Articles of Association, the objects of Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH are the promotion of science and research, education, public and vocational training, nature conservation and environmental protection, animal welfare and animal breeding, as well as civic engagement in support of the aforementioned charitable purposes.

In accordance with Article 2.4 of the Articles of Association, these objectives are to be achieved in particular by

- the establishment of coordinated conservation breeding programmes for species for which the creation of scientifically managed reserve populations is advisable or necessary due to their threat status or other relevant reasons,
- the systematic collection and processing of knowledge regarding the husbandry and breeding of species, as well as making this knowledge accessible to the general public,
- the targeted provision of opportunities for participation and further education with a focus on the keeping and breeding of wild animals, and
- the design and implementation of research projects in the field of animal and species conservation; the results shall be published in a timely manner.

During the reporting year, the number of conservation breeding programmes increased from 31 to 32. The number of animals rose to 5,376 across 448 breeding facilities, involving 270 participants in 12 countries. The topic of ex situ species conservation was prominently featured on the website, on social media, and in both specialist and general-interest press. Following an official seizure of highly endangered subspecies of the Alpine Salamander, CC, with the help of partners, advocated for the establishment of an Alpine Salamander Centre of Competence, funded the construction of a breeding station at the Sachsenhagen Wildlife and Species Conservation Centre, and has since provided human resources for coordination and knowledge transfer in this field.

Accordingly, all the objectives set out in the articles of association were addressed during the 2025 reporting year.



Our species management team on tour – pictured here on the sidelines of the VdZ conference in Berlin

FUNDING BODY 2025

Citizen Conservation is a stakeholder-led initiative. We would like to thank all our partners and shareholders who make CC's work possible through their financial (and, in the case of F&F, personnel) support.



€137,899



€50,000



€25,000



€25,000



€20,000



€10,000



€10,000



€10,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000



€5,000

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING DONORS FOR THEIR SUPPORT

Sera GmbH
 Saarbrücken Zoo
 Rheine Nature Zoo
 ARK Working Group of the DGHT
 Osnabrück Zoo
 David and Elke Kupitz

SPECIES CONSERVATION IS TEAMWORK

WE THANK OUR PARTNERS

FROGS & FRIENDS E.V.

Großbeerenstr. 84 • 10963 Berlin

Chairman: Dr. Mark-Oliver Rödel

Managing Director: Björn Encke

Register Court: Charlottenburg

Local Court

Register number: 33841 B

www.frogs-friends.org



Citizen Conservation Foundation gGmbH

Reichenberger Str. 88 • 10999 Berlin

Managing Director: Björn Encke

Register Court: Charlottenburg Local Court

Registered Office: Berlin HRB 239851 B

www.citizen-conservation.org