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**TAMPA'S LOWRY PARK ZOO FINDS SUCCESS IN BREEDING PROGRAM FOR
RARE AMPHIBIAN SPECIES**

TAMPA, Fla. (February 5, 2009) – Amphibian species have thrived for nearly 400 million years, but more than a third of the remaining 6,000 known amphibian species could go extinct in our lifetime. Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo has found success in breeding a critically endangered amphibian known as the Puerto Rican crested toad, recently returning more than 200 tadpoles to that country for reintroduction.

"A fast-moving fungus, loss of habitat, and other factors are wiping out frogs, toads and other amphibians at a rate not seen since the age of dinosaurs," said Craig Pugh, acting director of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo. "No one zoo can do it all, but each of us must do what we can through global links between zoos, aquariums and the world's conservation groups," he added.

Recent international conservation efforts focus on rescuing amphibians (that in nature cannot be protected from the chytrid fungus) by placing hundreds of amphibian species in breeding colonies in protected facilities. Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo has taken action to help save the Puerto Rican crested toad, a highly endangered species found only in a single pond in Puerto Rico.

As one of a few zoos to have a breeding group for these endangered toads, the herpetology staff at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo has successfully hatched and returned 239 tadpoles this season to Puerto Rico -- the most tadpoles for the zoo to date. More than a dozen "toadlets" are being raised at the zoo to ensure continued genetic diversity of the species, with a group of adult toads on exhibit in the zoo's Harrell Discovery Center.

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The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and many international partners declared 2008 the Year of the Frog to bring awareness to the plight of the world's amphibians, and to launch an urgent effort to save them. Continuing efforts include setting up conservation programs specific to the most imperiled amphibian species and promoting public awareness of amphibians and the threats they face.

“Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo is fortunate to have staff with the animal husbandry skills and expertise to help to save imperiled amphibian species,” said Curt Harbsmeier, board member of the Lowry Park Zoological Society. “Our location in central Florida makes us well suited for work with global partners, especially in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The zoo staff is profoundly dedicated to conservation and is committed to making a difference.”

About Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo

Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo is operated by the Lowry Park Zoological Society, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to excellence in education, conservation and research. Named the #1 zoo in America by *Child* magazine, the Zoo is located at 1101 W. Sligh Avenue in Tampa, one mile west of I-275 (exit 48). The Zoo is open seven days a week, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Parking is free. The zoo is a nonsmoking facility with smoking allowed only in limited designated areas as marked by visitor information signs. Visit LowryParkZoo.com or call (813) 935-8552 for more information.

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