

Vanishing Frogs

Why are so many frog species disappearing?



Leigh Haeger

Why did dozens of harlequin frog species start vanishing in the late 1980s? Scientists studying the brightly colored frogs might have solved the mystery. The experts blame a skin **fungus** for causing the frogs to die off. A fungus is a form of plant life that can cause disease in animals.

Harlequin frogs are not the only creatures in danger of dying out because of the disease.

"This fungus is killing amphibians all over the world," scientist Cynthia Carey told *Weekly Reader*.

An **amphibian** is an animal with a backbone that spends part of its life in water and part on land. Frogs, toads, and salamanders are amphibians. They are **cold-blooded**, which means their body temperature depends on their environment.



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Yellow Harlequin Frog

A Future for Frogs?

Scientists have been working to save the world's amphibians. Many of these creatures have already become **extinct**, or died out completely. Disease is not the only danger for amphibians. Their **habitat**¹ is being destroyed as people cut down trees in the areas where the animals live. Hunting, pollution, and weather changes are also contributing to the problem.

Is there any good news for frogs and other amphibians? New findings would lead to more research, says Carey. The research could help scientists save the remaining animals before the fungus spreads more.

¹ **habitat**: the place where an animal or plant lives or grows