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Toads in Trouble

By Amanda Wheat

- Our reporter in Costa Rica learned about humans' effect on amphibian species.

My journey to Costa Rica began with a long and treacherous boat ride down the Sierpe River. The waves were so monstrous that the boat capsized, and we had to swim to shore! But after setting foot on pure white sand, I knew I'd arrived at the Osa Peninsula, an uninhabited region where the lush rain forests stretch out to the Pacific Ocean. I was a first-year college student hoping to discover more about nature and culture. In Costa Rica, they have a phrase for this: "Pura Vida," meaning pure life.

After moving into a small wooden hut with a native family, I set to work studying the environment and the negative impact that humans can have on it. My mission soon brought me to the Monteverde Cloud Forest, once home to the golden toad. In previous times, the area had a constant cloud coverage that created a very dark, moist environment. Golden toads--easily recognized by their brilliant yellow-and-orange coloring--thrived in this moisture.

[\(See picture, "Golden Toad."\)](#)

However, global warming eventually had a very serious effect on the toads' habitat. Temperatures rose, the clouds lifted, and the moist environment grew dry. The golden toads simply could not adapt fast enough to survive.

Golden toads are extinct--gone forever--and many other *amphibian* species are in serious trouble due to climate and



habitat change. Our circle graph shows the current status of all amphibians. We share this planet with them. Humans need to improve our ways before more of these species vanish for good.

(See picture, "Circle Graph: Amphibian Species.")

What to Do

Use the information in the circle graph to answer the questions.

1. What percent of amphibians are near threatened?
2. In which category are the third-largest percent of amphibians?
3. How many more percentage points is the portion of amphibians that are endangered than the amphibians that are critically endangered?
4. About what fraction of amphibian species are currently considered *threatened* (critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable)?

- A. $\frac{1}{4}$
B. $\frac{1}{5}$

C. $\frac{1}{3}$

5. At the time of this assessment, there were 5,918 known amphibian species. How many of those are extinct? (For accuracy, round this answer down to the whole number.)

6. Of 4,863 known mammal species, 163 are critically endangered. For birds, 189 of 9,956 known species are critically endangered. Rounded to the nearest tenth, what percent of each group is critically endangered?

Web Wise

To learn more about amphibian species and what's being done to help them, visit www.globalamphibians.org

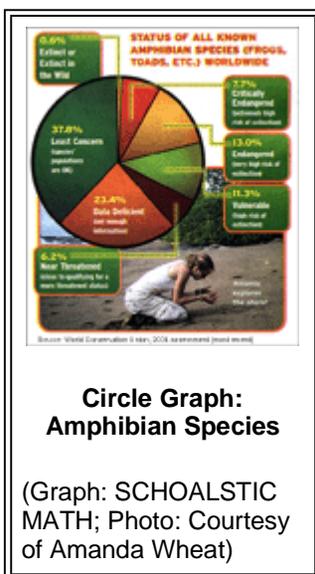
Answers

1. 6.2%
2. Endangered
3. 5.3 percentage points
4. C
5. 35 species



Golden Toad

(Credit: Michael & Patricia Fogden/Minden Pictures)



6. Mammals: 3.4%; Birds: 1.9%; both are significantly less than the percent of critically endangered amphibians (7.7%).

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