



## An Update on Crowdfunding for Chytrid 2.0

By Steven Allain, Tariq Stark & Sara Viernum

Some of you may be aware of the recent crowdfunding campaign that we initiated and coordinated as members of The Wandering Herpetologist (also in *FrogLog*: 116:20). This campaign ran on the crowdfunding website WorthWild and was titled "Studying the Eater of Salamanders in Belgium!". The aim was to raise \$5,000 for the analysis of samples for the presence of *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (*Bsal*) in Belgium Fire Salamanders (*Salamandra salamandra*). This fungus causes lethal chytridiomycosis in Urodela. The samples were collected by swabbing Fire Salamanders from areas where the disease was suspected or examining individuals that had died under suspicious circumstances. The research group that first identified and described the pathogen and disease at Ghent University, Belgium analysed all samples. Fire Salamanders have been most affected by the disease in Europe, but if sick or dead newts/salamanders of other species were found, we did aim to sample/analyse these too.

To kick off our crowdfunding campaign we put together an [initial video](#) outlining the threat that *Bsal* poses and what donor's money would be spent on. This video was hosted by AmphibiaWeb on their YouTube channel, of which we are very grateful. The video was well received and shortly afterward was followed by a [shorter video](#) with news of *Bsal* being discovered in Dinant, in the Belgian region of Wallonia. This video was also hosted by AmphibiaWeb. Both videos were constructed of footage from a number of volunteers, all of whom we would like to thank. We'd also like to thank our The Wandering Herpetologist team member Mark Goodman, for narrating the videos. There was also a lengthy social media campaign to try to help raise awareness of the campaign, which too was successful.

In the end we managed to raise \$645, which is unfortunately less than our \$5,000 target. However, this is still enough to test 20 or so samples for the presence of *Bsal*. Neither of us had been involved in such an ambitious project before and we're happy with where we've ended up. The whole team has learned some valuable lessons that will definitely help us with structuring crowdfunding campaigns in the future.

As this disease slowly marches on in Western Europe, we would like to highlight that this is a problem of ongoing concern. Please consider donating your time, energy and, if possible, money to research and citizen science initiatives on amphibian infectious diseases. We can all make a difference!

If you would like to know more about the current situation of *Bsal* in Europe, please visit [www.sossalamander.nl](http://www.sossalamander.nl) (by RAVON: Reptile, Amphibian and Fish Conservation the Netherlands). For more on the situation in the Americas please visit the *Bsal* Task Force at <http://www.salamanderfungus.org/>.

Lastly, we would like to thank our partners: Ghent University, RAVON, Natagora, AmphibiaWeb, the Amphibian Survival Alliance and Liège University.