

World's only known Sehuencas water frog joins Match: Lonely 'Romeo' gets an online dating profile in the hope of finding a mate to save his species

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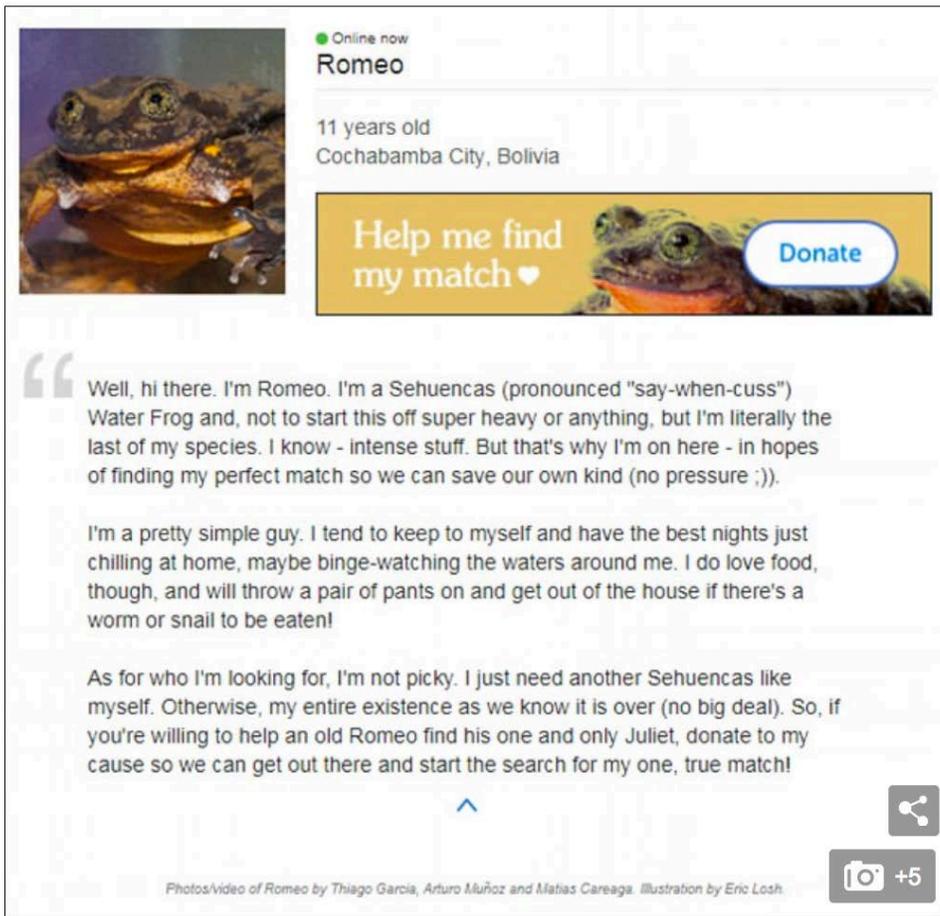
- **Romeo, a frog from Bolivia, has been given a dating profile to save his species**
- **The Sehuencas water frog is the last known individual of his species,**
- **Conservation groups teamed up with Match.com to give Romeo a platform**
- **It aims to raise awareness for him and funds for an expedition to find him a mate**
- **If all else fails, researchers wont rule out cloning as a means of preserving this amphibian species which, like many others, is threatened by climate change**

Romeo, an 11-year-old frog from Cochabamba City, Bolivia, has been given his own online dating profile in a bid to save his species.

The Sehuencas water frog, who is the last known individual of his species, has not had a partner for more than 10 years.

Conservation groups have teamed up with Match.com to give Romeo a platform and raise awareness for his story as well as funds for an expedition to find him a mate.

If all else fails, one of the researchers on the project wont rule out cloning as a means of preserving this amphibian species which, like many others, is threatened by climate change, habitat loss and other environmental and ecological issues.



Romeo, an 11-year-old frog from Cochabamba City, Bolivia, has been given his own online dating profile in a bid to save his species. Conservation groups have teamed up with Match.com to give Romeo a platform and raise awareness for his story as well as funds for an expedition to find him a mate

According to AFP, Romeo has been calling for a mate from his tank at the Cochabamba Natural History Museum for years.

Match.com teamed up with Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) and the Bolivian Amphibian Initiative in an effort to find a mate for Romeo.

'We don't want him to lose hope,' said Arturo Munoz, a conservation scientist associated with the Global Wildlife Conservation group.

According to the GWC, when biologists in Bolivia brought the Sehuencas frog into captivity ten years ago, they knew the species was likely in trouble, but didn't know they wouldn't be able to find another of the species by now.

The GWC aims to raise \$15,000 (£10,850) before Valentine's Day to fund biologists to find a mate for Romeo in the field, and Match.com will match each donation from February 9 until Valentine's Day.

The Bolivian Amphibian Initiative aims to send 10 expeditions to the streams and rivers where the Sehuencas water frog was once common to look for individuals to start a conservation breeding program.



Sehuencas frogs live for about 15 years, which means Romeo (pictured) has about four years left to find a mate. Romeo is shy, usually hiding under rocks in his enclosure. He emerges only at feeding time, with earthworms and snails among his favourite snacks

'We continue to remain hopeful that others are out there so we can establish a conservation breeding programme to save this species,' said Munoz.

Sehuencas frogs live for about 15 years, which means Romeo has about four years left to find a mate to continue his species.

Romeo is a shy creature, usually hiding under rocks in his enclosure.

He emerges only at feeding time, with earthworms and snails among his favourite snacks.

If Romeo dies without finding a mate, he could follow the route of 'Lonesome George,' a childless Galapagos tortoise who died in 2012, taking his entire subspecies with him.

A video introducing Romeo on his Match.com profile shows the frog swimming around, with a narrator explaining his story in the first person.

'Hi there. I'm Romeo, a Sehuencas water frog from Bolivia,' says a Spanish-accented voice.

'I'm a pretty simple guy. I tend to keep to myself and love spending nights at home. I also love eating. then again, who doesn't?'

His mobile phone profile, also shown in the video, shows a big-eyed, pouting cartoon frog posing seductively, with the words: 'Looking for my Juliet.'

Romeo's relationship status is listed as 'never married' with 'no' kids.

'I bet you're wondering what is a frog like me doing in a place like this?' the video continues.

'Well, I'm here to find my match, just like you. Except, my situation is a bit more... urgent.'

WHAT ARE SEHUENCAS WATER FROGS?

The Sehuencas water frog (*Telmatobius yuracare*) is a species of frog that occurs in the eastern Andes of Bolivia at 2,000-3,000 metres (6,561-9,842 feet) above sea level.

It is an aquatic frog species that lives on the bottom of small streams or rivers, and in ponds, in montane cloud forest and Yungas forest.

It is thought that it breeds in water by larval development.

The species has likely declines due to habitat loss and degradation due to agriculture and logging, as well as water pollution.

Chytridiomycosis, an infectious fungal diseases that affects amphibians worldwide, is also a potential threat.

Although the species is currently listed as vulnerable on the IUCN red list, this is based on an assessment from 2004, and researchers with the Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) and the Bolivian Amphibian Initiative say that an 11-year-old male Sehuencas frog named Romeo is the last of his species.

Source: [The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#)

When Romeo was collected 10 years ago, said Munoz, 'we knew the Sehuencas water frog, like other amphibians in Bolivia, was in trouble, but we had no idea we wouldn't be able to find a single other individual in all this time.

'Romeo started to call for a mate about a year after he was brought into captivity, but those calls have slowed in the last few years.'

Compared to other frogs in his genus, Romeo has an especially musical mating call, and has taught biologists much about his species, according to Munoz.

If the partnership can raise enough money for travel and equipment, the team of scientists hopes to launch 10 expeditions to locations where the species was once common, as well as similar habitats, or places where nobody has looked before.



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They will also scour streams and rivers for DNA evidence that the Sehuencas water frog may still be there, even if individuals cannot be tracked down.

If all else fails, Munoz does not rule out cloning as a means of preserving this amphibian species which, like many others, is threatened by climate change, habitat loss, alien predatory species introduced to rivers, and a fungus blamed for frog extinctions worldwide.

"So, if you believe in love and want to help an old frog out, please donate to my cause," Romeo's video concludes.



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