

Gigantes Limestone Frog, *Platymantis insulatus* Brown and Alcala, 1970 (Amphibia: Ceratobatrachidae) in the Philippines: Seeking Funding for Continued Conservation Operations¹

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Project Palaka (Figure 1A) is a nonprofit organization located in the Philippines. We are legally registered and recognized by the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission. Our project is the only organization in the country dedicated to the in-situ and ex-situ conservation of threatened species of endemic amphibians. Currently, we work with the Gigantes Limestone Frog, *Platymantis insulatus* Brown and Alcala, 1970 (Ceratobatrachidae, Figure 1B). This frog is currently the only amphibian species in the country designated as “Critically Endangered” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



Figure 1. A. Logos of Project Palaka. B. Gravid Gigantes Limestone Frog, *Platymantis insulatus*, adult female, approximately 46 mm long, housed in our captive breeding facility.

Platymantis insulatus is a karst-obligate species found only among the limestone hills of the Gigantes Islands, a group of small islands located in the Visayan Sea (Figures 2-3). The species' natural range is less than 4 km² and it is

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severely fragmented. Project Palaka houses an ex-situ colony of the frogs in Subic Bay, and we have regularly bred the frogs in captivity since October 2022 (Figure 4). We are preparing to return to the field in August 2024, with plans to release the captive-born offspring into the wild.



Figure 2. The Gigantes Islands in relation to the rest of the Philippines. The island of Borneo, containing parts of Malaysia, parts of Indonesia, and the country of Brunei, is shown in the southwestern corner. Figures 2 and 3 were created from Google Earth.



Figure 3. The Gigantes Islands. A. In comparison to nearby Panay Island (insert on panel B). B. Aerial photo of the Gigantes Islands (created with Google Earth). The yellow shaded areas denote the extent of the karst region, the available habitat for *Platymantis insulatus*.



Figure 4. *Platymantis insulatus*. A. Communally laid egg clutches of eggs. Each egg is approximately 3 mm in diameter. *Platymantis insulatus* is a direct-developer. B. A captive-bred neonate *P. insulatus*, snout to vent length, approximately 5 mm.

Project Palaka faced many challenges throughout 2022 and 2023, including an expensive, but necessary, relocation to a new facility. Our organization has secured the funding necessary to continue both our in-situ and ex-situ work, with one very notable exception- overhead costs. All funding currently held by the project is restricted for specific purposes- field equipment, supplies, etc. Due to a gap in funding, we need unrestricted funding to continue to pay overhead costs, including utilities, salaries for employees, costs associated with yearly government compliance filing, and emergency costs. We are seeking to raise \$60,000 USD before April 20th, 2024, to ensure the continued operations of the project until the end of April 2025.

We are close to our project conservation goals. Besides returning captive-bred offspring to the wild, we are working to have part of *P. insulatus*' natural habitat declared a protected area. Funding for overhead costs is the final hurdle that we need to overcome. We are certain that through our efforts, we can have this species downlisted on the IUCN Red List within the next 5-10 years.

If you are aware of any grant/funding opportunities that can be utilized for overhead costs, especially those with a rolling, open application, please contact us at projectpalaka@gmail.com. If you are a United States citizen or funding institution and wish to make a tax-deductible contribution to the project, donations can be made to our US nonprofit partner, the Harris Conservation Initiative (HCI): <https://harrisconservationinitiative.org/donate>. The HCI partners with many projects around the world; you will have a chance on the donation page to earmark the funds specifically for Project Palaka. HCI will not take an overhead percentage of any donated funds.

The Redbud, *Cercis canadensis* Linnaeus, 1753 and *Cercis occidentalis* (Fabaceae) Torrey ex A. Gray (1850), Phenology Project¹

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Your observations of eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis* Linnaeus, 1753, and western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis* Torrey ex A. Gray (1850) both in the Fabaceae, s will help researchers answer important questions about redbuds, such as: 1) When do these redbud trees flower and fruit across the species range? 2) How does the timing of these events vary across geography and elevation? 3) Has the timing of flowering and fruiting advanced in recent years?

How to participate?

Here are the steps to get started with The Redbud Phenology Project.

1. Create an account in Nature's Notebook and create a site for monitoring phenology.

Need help getting started? Take the Observer Certification Course located at <https://www.usanpn.org/nn/LPLCertification>.

When you register, you do not need to select anything from the list of Partner Groups. If you are part of an organization that wants to have multiple observers track the same trees, please email Samantha Brewer for more information.

2. Select your trees.

Identify one or more eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, or western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*, trees and add them to your site in Nature's Notebook. You will make observations on this plant or plants repeatedly through the season, so make sure it is conveniently located.

If you are already a Nature's Notebook observer, you can either add a redbud to your existing site or create a new site for your redbud if it is in a different location than the other species you track.

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