



10-19-2011

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Recommended Citation

Kurz, Matt, "Lehr Receives National Geographic Grant" (2011). *News and Events*. 1615.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/1615>

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Lehr Receives National Geographic Grant

October 19, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan biologist **Edgar Lehr** has been awarded a grant by the **National Geographic Society's Global Exploration Fund** to conduct research in 2012 that may shed new light on why the world's amphibian population is declining.

Lehr will lead a research team composed of U.S. and Peruvian biologists that will study amphibian and reptile diversity, and analyze specimens gathered from the Pui Pui Protected Forest for a type of fungal infection that is impacting worldwide amphibian populations. Along with a Peruvian colleague, Lehr will helicopter into the otherwise inaccessible Andean mountain ranges of the Pui Pui to conduct fieldwork. Colleagues at the University of California at Berkeley and the National University of San Marcos in Lima will perform laboratory testing of specimens that are gathered.



Edgar Lehr



Photo by Alessandro Catenazzi

The Bryophryne hanssaueri is one of three species of frogs previously discovered by Lehr and Catenazzi in Peru.

“Little is known of the Pui Pui Protected Forest and to the best of my knowledge ours will be the first major biological research in this region,” said Lehr, who was part of a team in 2009 that discovered three new frog species in southwestern Peru. “In addition to gathering specimens to determine the incidence of a specific fungal infection, which is a global issue, I expect that we’ll find many new species as part of our fieldwork in this unexplored area.”

Lehr in collaboration with Swiss-Peruvian ecologist Alessandro Catenazzi, from UC Berkeley, has uncovered more than 10 new species of amphibians in Peru, since 2004.

“We should know what else is living on our planet,” said Lehr, who noted scientists estimate there are between 5 million to 100 million organisms on Earth, with only about 2 million classified. “So we are far from a true understanding of the complete planet.”

National Geographic's Global Exploration Fund provides support for research, conservation and exploration projects.

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