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Professor Helps to Discover New Species of Frog

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Edgar Lehr, assistant professor of biology at Illinois Wesleyan University, is part of a duo that recently discovered three new species of frogs living in the forests of southern Peru.

Lehr and his partner, Swiss-Peruvian ecologist Alessandro Catenazzi from the University of California at Berkeley, have worked together to uncover more than 10 new species of amphibians. “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.”

The three recently discovered species are excellent examples of the diversity of amphibians, according to Lehr. All three new species – *Bryophryne hanssaueri*, *Bryophryne gymnotis*, and *Bryophryne zonalis* – actually do not have a tadpole phase. With their discovery, there are now six known *Bryophryne* species.

Over the past several years, Lehr has made nearly two dozen trips to the Peruvian forests. His first journey there dates back to 1997, when he was working on his doctorate from the University of Frankfurt am Main in Germany. After earning his degree, he worked at the State Natural History Collections in Dresden, Germany, where he was the curator of herpetology. He joined the Illinois Wesleyan biology faculty this fall.

The co-author of *Terrestrial-Breeding Frogs (Stabomantidae) in Peru* (Natur- und Tier-Verlag, 2009) Lehr has built an impressive career studying amphibian species. First published at the age of 17, he discovered a new species of turtle at age 23 when he was studying in South Vietnam, and so far has described 70 new species. He is the recipient of several grants, including those from the German Research Foundation, the BIOPAT initiative, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Field Museum of Natural History and the American Museum of Natural History. He is associate editor of the *Journal of Herpetology*.