

Scientific School Work of Amphibian Monitoring in Patagonia



Watching an adult male of *Alsodes coppingeri* in Villa O'Higgins' forests. Photo: Javiera Cisternas.

By Javiera Cisternas

During 2011 the NGO “Aumen o el eco de los montes” developed the project “Investigating shapes, colors and songs of our amphibians” in four schools of Patagonia, Chile. The main objective of this project was to improve children’s knowledge of their local amphibian species. This was achieved by presenting purpose—designed posters, books and compact discs of amphibian’s calls in each working day, conducting field activities of watching tadpoles and adult amphibians near their schools and visits from amphibian experts (university teachers and doctoral students) to their classrooms.

The impact of the project was so successful that a group of four children from the school “Pioneros del Sur” at Villa O’ Higgins locality, decided to research into specific issues of the amphibians that occur nearby. Through e-mail exchanges between the manager of the school and the NGO, the children were presented with a range of different topics for them to investigate. Finally, they decided to separate into two groups to investigate two important issues; “Fungal and bacteriological effects of skin secretions from *Alsodes coppingeri*” and “*Alsodes coppingeri* the strange frog that didn’t sing.” The results of both projects were presented in the Regional Scientific Congress Aysen Region awarding First prize on Primary Education and First prize “Forjadores Ambientales” respectively.



Watching a tadpole of *Alsodes coppingeri* in Villa O'Higgins. Photo: Javiera Cisternas.

With these awards they were able to compete at the National Scientific Congress from Chile obtaining First Prize on Quality of Presentation.

Furthermore, the children maintain constant visits to frog breeding sites surrounding their school and make natural history observations, which are well-known for some species, but also unpublished for others. An example of this were the unprecedented observations collected for *Alsodes coppingeri* such as the recording of mating calls, description of egg-laying and determination

of time of reproduction for this species in this locality. Furthermore, they extended the geographic distribution of *Pleurodema bufoninum* which was thought to only live on steppe environments.

Given the success of this experience, Aumen NGO decided to initiate a joint monitoring program with “Pioneros del Sur” school, achieving the first step on the evaluation of appropriate indicators to monitor *Alsodes coppingeri* populations on a long term.