

ROMEO

Greetings from Cochabamba!

My good friend Teresa tells me that you, too, have found yourself in hot water, so to speak.

I am here to tell you not to despair! Trust me, I get it. I thought I was the last of my kind for an entire decade, but my story inspired so many people that they managed to find my Juliet and give me a chance at love...and my species a chance at a future. ¡Qué increíble, no?!

I know you're far from home. I know you'd much rather be snuggling up in your own stream, eating the wild snails and earthworms of your choice. But look, there are lots of reasons to be hopeful:

- 1. There are 14 of you.** I won't deny it: it's not great when your entire species could fit in a shoebox with room to spare. But for the longest time, there was only one of me. Oh, the pressure! But then, look at the Black-footed Ferret! The California Condor! The wild horse with the whacky name (Przewalski's)! With a little TLC from humans, your species has a real chance here.
- 2. Your people are talking to my people.** That's right, experts at the National Zoo of Chile are talking to experts from the Museo de Historia Natural Alcide d'Orbigny, who are sharing everything they know about caring for water frogs (¡como yo!). They're also talking to experts in Peru and the United States. That means you've got cheerleaders around the world, and that's what has helped keep me going!
- 3. The government of Chile is on it.** The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism helped rescue you, and now they're going to figure out how to restore and protect your habitat, so you or your future tadpoles can return to a creek full of water someday. In the meantime, you get to enjoy an all-you-can-eat snail and earthworm buffet, and five-star accommodations. Definitely not home sweet home, but not a bad place to wait out the renovations to your wild residence!
- 4. It's about H2O, yo.** Not to get all ecosystem service-y on you here, but humans need us amphibians. We are the bell to their wether, the canaries to their coal mines. Pollute our water, take away our water, and anyone else who depends on water (read: all things living) will eventually be in the same kind of trouble. So really, they have to take a hint at this point. Right?

It's true. Humans got us into this mess. But since your human friends at the zoo are like mine at the museum and all over the world, you'll know that so many of them are committed to fixing this mess. So for all of these reasons, don't give up!

I'm including a photo of me and the love of my life, Julieta--I just know you'll get your happy ending, too.

Besos,

Romeo

Me and my Julieta.
(Thanks to Sophia Barron for snapping this shot!)

