

July 2026 — Project Update

Colombia: Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

Field Partner: Fundación Atelopus

Background: Rising to 5,775 m above sea level, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (SNSM), a Key Biodiversity Area, is home to 17 endemic amphibians, including 5 species of Harlequin toads (*Atelopus*)—the world's most threatened genus of amphibians. These toads face threats from habitat loss and disease transmission by the amphibian chytrid fungus. Biome's partner in Colombia, Fundación Atelopus, monitors their populations and epidemiological status in the SNSM and assesses threats to their survival. The data helps to inform community-led conservation initiatives on the ground.



As of mid 2026, Fundación Atelopus has conducted two field expeditions around the town of San Pedro de la Sierra and one in the Indigenous community of Sogrome, with a focus on the Santa Marta Harlequin Toad (*Atelopus laetissimus*) and the Starry Night Toad (*Atelopus arsyeque*).

In San Pedro, 62 individuals of the Santa Marta Harlequin Toad were recorded while in Sogrome, 38 specimens of the Starry Night Toad were tallied. Populations appear stable yet fragile, given that a single stochastic or anthropogenic event could severely impact them.



During these expeditions, the team works with the local communities on the development of small-scale conservation and restoration initiatives.

The first half of 2026 marked the beginning of ecological restoration activities in the communities of San Pedro and Sogrome. Project staff worked with locals on nursery production related activities, including seed collection, seedling management and transplantation, irrigation, and pest control. It is expected that the nurseries will produce around 4,000 native seedlings annually at each of the project's restoration sites.

With environmental education, fun interactive games were held at rural schools in San Pedro and Sogrome. These help students learn to recognize and understand the ecological importance of the iconic, endemic and Critically Endangered amphibian species in their communities and in the SNSM.

Lastly, as part of the project's legal compliance and operational sustainability component, Fundación Atelopus was successful in obtaining a renewal of its research permit. This five-year permit represents a significant vote of confidence for Fundación Atelopus' research, conservation, and community work.

Thanks again for your support for this work!

with my best wishes,

Carlos R. García

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*Sogrome community
monitoring group*

