

Climate change may threaten species of amphibians and reptiles in southwestern Europe

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Projected climate change could trigger massive range contractions among amphibian and reptile species in the southwest of Europe, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Biogeography*.

Araújo et al. projected distributions of 42 amphibian and 66 reptile species 20-50 years into the future under four emission scenarios proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and two different climate models (HadCM3 and CSIRO2). The researchers found that increases in temperature are not likely to constitute a major threat to amphibian and reptile species in Europe. Indeed, a global cooling scenario would be much worse.

However, increases in aridity could trigger contractions in the distributions of nearly all species occurring in the southwest of Europe, including Portugal, Spain and France. Impacts in these three countries are not trivial because, together, they hold 62% of the amphibian and reptile species present in Europe.

The high proportion of amphibian and reptile species occurring in these three countries is due to the key role played by the Iberian Peninsula as refugia against extinctions during past glacial periods. With projected climate changes 'these hotpots of persistence might be at risk of becoming hotspots of extinction', says Dr. Miguel Araújo.

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

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