

Studbook and Breeding Programme Egyptian or Kleinmann's tortoise

Testudo kleinmanni

Annual report 2006

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1. Introduction and activities 2006

1a Introduction.

Compiling a studbook and publishing an annual report based on the reported data by all studbook participants turned out to be regularly difficult. Quite a few participants have other things on their minds during December and January and all relevant data are reported later during the first few months of the year. Analysing and entering all the data into the studbook programme and writing the annual report costs often some months. For this reason this time the studbook progress and annual report covers the period January 2006 until July 2007.

One of the aims for 2006 was improvement of the co-operation between ESF and the EAZA EEP studbook. It can be concluded that this co-operation improved. The zoos of Chester, London, Jersey and Bristol put their offspring at disposal of the ESF-studbook.

Also good to assess is the improvement of communication within the studbook.

1b Activities

Very good to assess is the increase of studbook participants and in particular the entry of new German participants. Perhaps the replacement of full names of the participants by studbook code names is one cause of this increase. One other reason can be the improvement of functioning of the German DGHT AG Schildkroten Working Group. A few of these Working group people entered the ESF studbook. However still the majority of the AG Schildkroten members unfortunately did not enter their animals into the ESF studbook.

Breeding within the studbook also improved; the number of breeders increased from 3 to 5.

The entry of EAZA EEP specimens into the ESF studbook is a very important step forward towards close co-operation between ESF and EAZA.

Of the EAZA EEP husbandry guidelines a second version is drafted and will be published on the EAZA website in the second half of 2007. These guidelines will also be available for the ESF participants.

In 2007 Rob Verhoeks positively responded to the question to become co studbook keeper for the ESF studbook. His input is very valuable and he will certainly deliver an important contribution to the studbook and the progress of turtle husbandry and breeding in particular.

2. Studbook population

On July 31 2007 the total studbook population counts 32.40.75 (147) specimens. This is an increase of 59 specimens compared to the last report of 2004 and 2005.

The sex ratio of 32.40 adult specimens is good. Of the 75 unknown sex specimens the majority is captive born.

All breeders and recipients of these specimens will be asked to report the sex of the tortoises as soon as this can be determined.

3. Locations

The number of participants increased from 15 to 22, divided over 4 countries:

10 in the Netherlands, 7 in Germany, 4 in Belgium and 1 in the Czeck Republic.

4. Births

During 2006 and the first 6 months of 2007 37 births are reported at 6 locations.

At location 4 (16), location 8 (1), location 13 (7), location 17 (9), location 19 (1) and location 21 (3). At this last location more births are reported but these specimens were not offered to the studbook. At this location there are also births reported during 2004 and 2005; a number of these captive born animals are not entered into the studbook and 4 are entered to the studbook. The births at location 21 are all F2 results and born from parents born at two non ESF locations in Germany.

5. Imports

25 new entries to be considered as imports are reported during 2006 and the first 6 months of 2007. 10 specimens are of unknown origin. 12 are captive born in former non participating locations and or non participating locations. 1 is captive born and is entered into the studbook together with the Dams and Sires of this hatchling by one new participant.

2 adult animals are long term wild caught animals and are newly entered into the studbook by one new participant (22).

6. Deaths

7 deaths are reported from 3 locations. At location 13 2 captive born specimens died; 1 born in 2004 and 1 born in 2006. At location 13 also 2 wild caught adult animals died. One male of unknown age died without any symptoms of disease within a few days; one female of unknown age died one year after transfer from location 4 to location 13. At location 17 one hatchling died shortly after birth. At location 1 two adult wild caught females died.

The 2 deaths at location 13 indicate once more that wild caught specimens are very vulnerable. After a period of sometimes several years showing no symptoms of disease during this period the animals suddenly die. Autopsy on the female showed kidney and liver failure.

7. Transfers

During 2006 and the first 6 months of 2007 18 specimens were transferred between studbook participants. With 1 exception these all concerned captive born studbook specimens moving from breeding studbook locations to new studbook participants or from breeding studbook locations to other studbook participants. Four adult long term captive animals were introduced into the studbook through a procedure agreed with the Dutch CITES authorities; the animals got the legal status by becoming property of the European Studbook Foundation and then being transferred to the 2 studbook participants on a breeding loan basis.

8. Discussion

A significant number of new entries into the studbook concerns captive born animals from outside the studbook. Unfortunately these breeders are not participating into the studbook despite several requests.

A limited number of studbook participants are not reporting all their offspring to the studbook. Reason for this is that they sell the offspring to non studbook participants without knowing whether these recipients are prepared to participate. This is a valid reason however preventing creating a proper insight in breeding within captivity.

When these breeding results are not reported to the studbook and these animals will be reported much later to the studbook by new participants also the origin is often unknown while they have their Dams and Sires registered in the studbook already. Assessment of the genetic relations within the studbook will be also hindered by that.

Good development to be mentioned here are the activities by one participant within the DGHT AG Schildkroten working group. This group is currently collecting and compiling husbandry information on nutrition, climates, sex ratio, enclosure soil etc.

This information will become available for the ESF studbook and will be distributed to the studbook participants either by regular emails of annual reports.

The fact that EAZA EEP zoos are now offering their offspring to ESF private participants is a positive development. Exchange of offspring

between both parties is a option for the near future creating the situation that genetic diversity of the European population in general is guaranteed.

On an annual basis a few animals are offered to the ESF studbook and/or ESF board members and of the Dutch Turtle and Tortoise Society (NSV). The animals are sometimes smuggled out of Egypt by ignorant tourists not knowing that the species is internationally protected and sometimes it concerns animals being in captivity for longer periods (up to 10 or 20 years) and are no longer wanted by their keepers. With the Dutch CITES authorities a procedure is developed to legalise the animals. One important condition is that it must be clear that there are no underlying illegal intentions.

All these animals become property of the European Studbook Foundation and are transferred to studbook participants on a breeding loan basis with help of a contract.

ESF thanks the Dutch CITES authorities at the DR office (DR stands for Dienst Regelingen translated into Regulations Services) for this service, trust and acknowledgement of the ESF studbooks.

The studbook develops into a positive direction caused by increase of studbook population, number of breeding results, number of participants, very limited number of deaths.

Together with the improving co-operation between the ESF studbook and the EAZA EEP a healthy basis is created for the development of a genetically healthy European population of the species.

In Egypt to first steps are put regarding research on possible reintroduction programmes of confiscated tortoises into a protected area in the north of the country (Omayad reserve).

In the Netherlands the Dutch Turtle and Tortoise Society is funding this project. Several ESF studbook breeders developed an agreement on which recipients of captive born animals voluntarily donate an amount of money for this project instead of buying the animals from the breeders. The money raised will also be used for funding the project in Egypt. All captive born studbook tortoises will be transferred to other recipients on a breeding loan basis. This way a certain stability is created within the studbook and an increase of studbook participants.

Final remark:

Within the last six months of 2007 a number of in Italy confiscated *Testudo kleinmanni* will probably be transferred to the EAZA EEP. Of a number of EAZA EEP collections their current tortoises will be transferred to other EEP collections. If not sufficient recipients will be found it will considered to look for suitable ESF *T. kleinmanni* studbook collections.

This is all with a lot of reserve. This will of course bring a lot of organizing for both the studbook keeper and co studbook keeper of the ESF studbook and for the EEP studbook keeper.

For this reason this report here is a brief inventory of facts and numbers. The next report will certainly give more general extended information on

the progress of the studbook and of course an overview of the upcoming transfer of EEP animals and possible transfer of EEP tortoises to the ESF privates.

With these Italian confiscations the total European captive population in both the EEP and ESF studbook will increase to almost 1000 specimens.

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