

STUDBOOK BREEDING PROGRAMME *GEOCHELONE ELEGANS* ANNUAL REPORT 2002

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1. INTRODUCTION AND ACTIVITIES IN 2002

1.1 Introduction

The current studbook for *Geochelone elegans* was started September 2002. So this is the first annual report. During the past several months much time was spent on a special group of specimens of the species. August 2002 in Hong Kong a shipment of the species was confiscated. After the first housing at the Kadoorie Farms and Botanical Gardens (KFBG) in Hong Kong the animals were handed over to the Turtle Survival Alliance. TSA Europe, not being able to own animals according to global TSA regulations, donated the tortoises to the European Studbook Foundation (ESF). The ESF studbook placed the 38 animals at 10 locations in The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

The studbook keeper spent much time on communication with the TSA Europe-board, the ESF-board and searching for suitable locations. Through this not much time could be spent on publicity for the studbook. Although *Geochelone elegans* is not kept in high numbers within Europe, many more animals must be kept in captivity than the current numbers reported to the studbook. It is to be expected that after some publicity the studbook population will increase.

1.2 Activities

The procedures necessary for starting a studbook were still under development when TSA-Europe contacted ESF. After confiscation of 100 specimens of *G. elegans* in Hong Kong by customs the Cites-authorities asked the TSA for help (see "introductions"). The animals were 1 to 2 years old. Weights varied between 40 and 120 grams.

KFBG gave the tortoises the first necessary medical care.

TSA-Europe and TSA-US were supposed to home 50 tortoises at selected locations each. Despite all efforts by KFBG first at October 17 only 38 specimens could be shipped to Amsterdam airport. The ESF-studbook keeper had already selected 10 locations; they all were prepared to house to animals on basis of a contract.

All animals turned out to be very light in weight and severely infected by worms, flagellates and amoebas, and were dehydrated. The condition of some individuals was very bad and long life expectance was considered not to be high.

The studbook had functioned as liaison between TSA and ESF boards and the studbook participants, and between the participants among themselves.

December 31 2002 the average condition was still very critical. The expectation was that intensive care during the first few months of 2003 was required.

2. STUDBOOK POPULATION

December 31, 2003 the total number of reported living animals was 37(2.3.32).

Twenty-seven belong to the Hong Kong shipment. The sexes of these specimens are still unknown.

3. LOCATIONS

December 23 2002 at twelve locations thirty-seven specimens were kept. A very positive point is the fact that participation from Belgium and Germany can be reported.

Furthermore participation by the Prague Zoo could be possible.

4. BIRTHS

In 2002 2 participants have reported 4 births. Unfortunately due to unknown cause one of these animals died shortly after birth. The studbook keeper knows that at a third location also births have been taken place. Hopefully these animals will be reported soon.

Furthermore it is known that in The Netherlands as well as in other European countries there have been some breeding successes.

The studbook keeper is therefore optimistic about the ex situ captive population of *G. elegans* in Europe. With this respect exchanging animals is very necessary. The various geographical forms within the species have to be seriously addressed with that respect.

5. DEATHS

In 2002 12 animals died, 11 of them originating from the Hong Kong group. The twelfth death is mentioned above. Seen the average condition of the Hong Kong group more deaths are to be expected.

6. TRANSFERS

Besides placement of the 38 TSA-ESF animals another 2 hatchlings are transferred from one location to another.

7 DISCUSSION

Apart from the Hong Kong group the studbook counts not many individual specimens. A considerable number of the studbook population is related. The studbook keeper has the intention to give the studbook more publicity by means of publications and personal contacts.

It is the intention to compile a photo-databank for the registration of the different geographical types of the species.

Animals confiscated as a group (with this respect there are 2 groups within the studbook) will be managed as separate distinguished groups. This is certainly important for wild-caught animals.

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