

# **Studbook breeding programme**

## **Indotestudo (Geochelone)**

### **elongata**

**(Yellow-headed tortoise)**



Photo: Henk Zwartepoorte

## **Annual report 2009**

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### **1. a. Introduction:**

The re-start of the studbook in 2006 was not an easy one for both the co studbook keeper and myself. Between 1999 and 2006 a large number of participants stopped keeping the species and/or simply participating by stopping the communication. Some former participants could not be traced.

The studbook dated November 2007 the studbook population counted 22.35.123 (180) specimens which indicated that a number of the former studbook participants could be traced and also new participants could be interested in participation.

### **1. b. Activities during 2006 and 2007.**

Through intensive searching and communicating quit a large number of new participants and specimens were found participating into the newly to be set up studbook.

A questionnaire was sent to you in the first week of January 2008 and the response was positive. In 2007 the European Studbook Foundation was approached by the CITES authorities of Denmark with the request to accept a group of confiscated specimens at that time homed at the Copenhagen Zoo. The offer was accepted and after the formal CITES procedures and issuing of paperwork the animals were transferred to ESF in November 2007. 33 specimens were transferred to 6 studbook participants, two in Belgium, one in the UK and 3 in the Netherlands.

### **2. Studbook population:**

31 December 2009 the total studbook population counts 34.51.139 (224) specimens. An increase of 44 specimens compared to the studbook of 2006/2007 and an increase of 3 compared to the June 2009 studbook. This growth stop at itself is not a problem. At Rotterdam Zoo, where a significant number of births occurred, reproduction was stopped for the reason that the offspring of these bloodlines are well represented within the studbook. It is now the task of the studbook keeper to discuss at which locations reproduction is wanted and at which not. Recommendations will be done very soon.

### **3. Locations:**

31 December 2009 the species was kept at 27 locations. Privates: 8 in Belgium, 1 in the United Kingdom, 1 in the Czech Republic, 1 in Germany and 16 in the Netherlands.

EAZA zoos: Wroclaw Zoo in Poland, Munster Zoo in Germany, Terrariet Vissenbjerg and Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark, Plzen Zoo in the Czech Republic, Tregomeur Zoo in France and Rotterdam Zoo in the Netherlands.

### **4. Births:**

In 2007 at the Czech Republic at one private location 6 animals were born and then further 4 in 2008 and one in 2009. This is a successful breeder. In 2008 at private two locations in Belgium 2 births are reported at each location. One birth was reported that year by a Dutch breeder; 8 by a second breeder in the Netherlands and finally that year 4 births by a third Dutch breeder. Finally 2 births were reported in 2009 by one of the 2008 breeders in the Netherlands. So in total during 2008 and 2009 at 6 different locations 24 births are reported.

### **5. Imports:**

November 2007 33 specimens were received from the Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark. This occurred after agreement between the CITES Denmark authorities and the ESF board. This agreement contained that all 33 specimens became ESF property and that they were homed on a breeding loan basis at different ESF studbook locations accompanied with an ESF contract. So all 33 specimens entered the studbook considered as a new import.

### **6 Deaths:**

During 2008 and 2009 only one death was reported by the Tregomeur Zoo in France. In addition it is appropriate to also mention here the death of 6 CITES Denmark specimens including the 5 at the Belgium private location. See also 8.i

### **7. Transfers:**

During 2008 and 2009 thirty three animals, mainly captive born hatchlings within the studbook, were transferred to other studbook locations or to new locations within the group of private participants. Furthermore 4 captive born animals were transferred from Rotterdam Zoo to Wroclaw Zoo in Poland. 5 animals including 2 captive born animals moved from the Munster zoo to Plzen Zoo in the Czech Republic. For details see the studbook.

### **8. Discussion:**

**8.i.** After a somewhat slow re starting process during 2006 and 2007 the studbook is now running pretty well. There still are some problems with a few

participants with respect to proper communication, but these will be solved soon. Also a few specimens disappeared from the studbook without informing the studbook keeper or the co studbook keeper which is a very unwanted phenomena. Unfortunately thus a few animals will be mentioned in the studbook as LTF meaning Lost to Follow up.

One very negative issue has to be reported here regarding the CITES Denmark specimens. 6 specimens were transferred to one Dutch participant in November 2007. This long term very reliable studbook participant agreed to temporarily take the animals when it turned out that one initially interested person suddenly broke off all communication. One specimen died at this Dutch location and the remaining 5 were transferred to location Mr. D. in Belgium. Due to several sad personal causes all 5 animals died there within several months.

Very positive is the birth of 24 births at 6 different locations. After a period of large numbers of births reported by the Rotterdam Zoo these new bloodlines are very welcome. Also from the fact that only one death was reported we can conclude that the management within the studbook is in good hands. A number of keepers was asked to collect and report growth data. In particular of the CITES Denmark specimens it is important to follow the growth and well being of the specimens. Of the total of 33 Danish specimens 7 died; one at the Dutch location and 1 at the location in the UK. These deaths were very shortly after arrival which could mean that the animals were not in a very good condition.

### **8.ii Growth and condition:**

In order to get a better picture on growth of captive born animals and this also in relation to a possible existence of different geographical forms, a number of breeders is asked to collect data on growth by measuring and weighing their animals on a regular basis. This is done so far by just a few and this year a few more breeders will be asked to participate. From the Rotterdam Zoo a large amount of data is received.

As mentioned above in particular the CITES Denmark specimens are important and at present 4 recipients of the Danish animals collected growth data. Below the weights of three locations. Of the locations Lippens en Vogt data were received from the moment of acquiring in November 2007 until May and June 2010. From the location Collin only June 2010 weights are received. From the location Pol weights were received from two dates.

Indotestudo elongata CITES Der		
Specimen	Location	Date
		7-6-2010
1	Collin	720
2	Collin	745
3	Collin	570
4	Collin	450
5	Collin	1150
6	Collin	620
7	Collin	790
8	Collin	920

Indotestudo elongata CITES Denmark weights					
Specimen	Location	Date			
		1-11-2007	1-9-2008	1-7-2009	30-5-2010
140	Vogt	345	630	890	1690
141	Vogt	445	730	910	1800
142	Vogt	320	485	635	1610
143	Vogt	285	405	495	1680
144	Vogt	280	370	480	1290

#### Indotestudo elongata CITES Denmark weights

##### Lippens

##### Specimen Location Date

		20-12-2007	21-2-2008	10-6-2008	5-11-2008	8-4-2009	12-8-2009	8-1-2010	8-6-2010
1 male	Lippens	340	340	355	410	505	515	530	549
2 female	Lippens	380	421	487	533	615	682	696	727
3 female	Lippens	540	620	738	787	824	896	980	1039
4 female	Lippens	562	630	690	740	853	917	1010	1077
5 female	Lippens	608	703	780	834	963	1020	1296	1431

#### Indotestudo elongata CITES Denmark weights Pol

Specimen	Location	Date	Date
		9/12010	26-6-2010
1 male	Pol	572	784
2 female	Pol	886	1144

**Fig. 1: Weights of 20 CITES Denmark specimens.**

From the locations Collin and Vogt no sexes of the specimens have been reported yet and from one recipient growth data still have to be reported. From the figures of the specimens kept at the locations Pol and Lippens it is interesting to see that females show a faster increase of weight than males. See also appendices: graphs 1,2,3 and 4.

#### **8.iii Taxonomy:**

The origin of all studbook specimens is unknown. At present only the species elongata is described although different morphological types can be recognized. Over the last few decades from different locations of natural origin tortoises are exported to a large number of countries all over the world including Europe. Since a couple of years it became clear that morphological forms and in relation to that different carapax lengths can be seen.

Roughly types of 20 cm+ and 30 cm+ are kept. Through comparison of different sized specimens with colour morphs perhaps a contribution can be paid to an adjusted view on the taxonomy of *Indotestudo elongata*. Within a captive colony such as a studbook/breeding programme it certainly makes sense to pay attention to this phenomena and manage large and small types separately. From all studbook participants photo's and sizes and weights data will asked to collect this year.

#### 8.iv Activities planned for 2010:

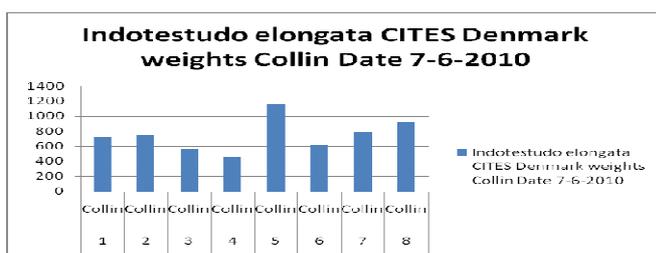
1. Collecting data on growth, size and weight of all studbook specimens.
2. Collect and compile literature.
3. Drafting husbandry guidelines.
4. Develop a nutritional advise. A questionnaire will be sent to all participants.

#### 8.v Acknowledgements:

Since the re start of the studbook/breeding programme in 2006 the feed back and communication by a large majority of the participants is an important cause of the viability of this programme for which we thank those participants. This year will be used to improve communication and cooperation.

Special thanks go to co studbook keeper Wim Fontijne who did a tremendous job collecting all relevant data and communicating with the studbook participants as well as entering all these collected data into the Sparks software programme.

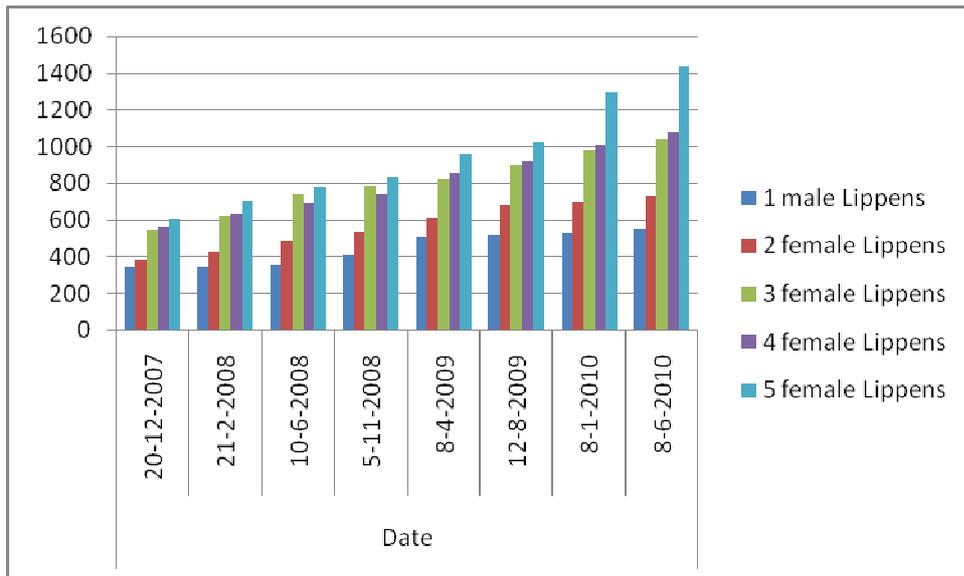
### 9. Appendices:



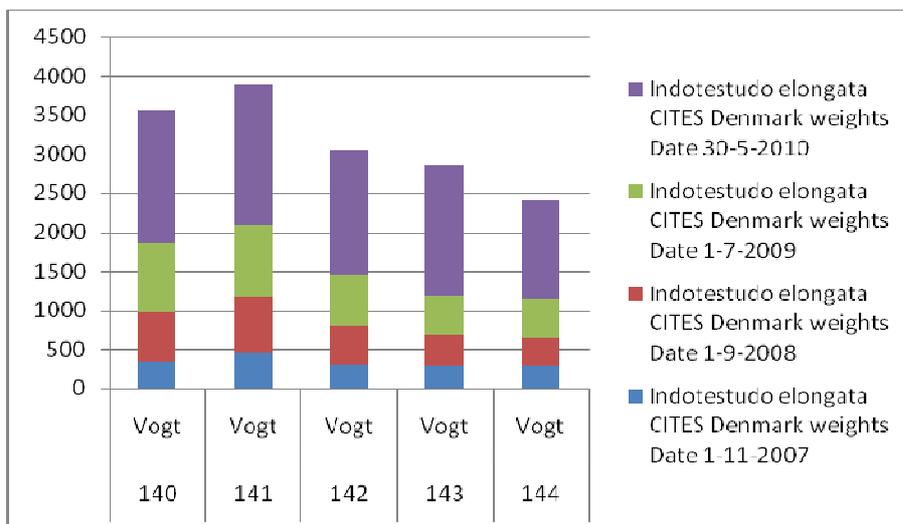
Graph 1:



Graph 2:



**Graph 3:**



**Graph 4:**