

Progress report 2005-2007

Studbook *Geochelone elegans*, (Schoepff 1795)



photo: Arnaud van den Berg

stnr : 205

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1.0 Introduction

In the annual report of 2004, Peter Bulsing, former studbook keeper, asked for a continuator to take over the studbook. In that same studbook report one can read the reasons to which Peter eventually has decided to transfer the studbook.

I have been approached in the summer of 2006 by Peter and by the 1st of January 2007 I can call myself studbook keeper of the studbook *Geochelone elegans*.

I want to thank Peter for its enormous involvement and use for this studbook which he has revitalised in 2002.

Fortunately we can count on his involvement. Peter has agreed to become co-studbook keeper.

By cause of several circumstances the annual reports 2005 and 2006 are lacking, I have decided, in consultation with the ESF board and Peter Bulsing, to make a progress report over the years 2005 up to and including 2007.

For this report I have only approached the ESF participants (HKI en HKII).

It was of great importance to have that information first. This had its primacy over the other participants.

I have always, however, got information of a select group of participants.

Up to that point I can say that I am quite well informed.

Following year I will approach all the studbook participants.

1.1 Activities the 2005-2007

The numbers of registrations have strongly increased since 2004. At this moment there are 271 registrations. The increase is especially attributed by new participants with a severe number of adult animals (breeding groups). The studbook is also increased by a great number of births (Yes!!!!).

In the previous years there already where some breeding results, since 2005 there have been more and more breeding results.

Unfortunately there in the period 2005-2007 also animals have died. Animals have died within the HK groups and at the other registrations. The cause of death is usually unknown.

1.2 HongKong I group (HKI).

In the period 2005-2007 only two animals have died. The original number of 39 has decreased to a number of nine animals. In the annual report of 2004 Peter already predicted more or less that possible more animals from this group would not survive.

These tortoises are present at four locations (two in the Netherlands with 4 animals and two in Germany with 5 animals).

There are some star tortoises from that group that hardly gained any weight.

The expectation that more animals will die is inevitable.

Six animals grow steadily and have gained a weight at which they can become reproductive.

It concerns two locations. A location in the Netherlands, and a location in Germany.

At the location in Germany the first eggs have been laid. These animals are in possession of Hans-Jurgen Bidmon. The result was a clutch of four eggs which have been laid on 24 Augusts 2007 between 16:00h and 19:00h.

The weight of the individual eggs where 2 x 23g, 22g and 25g. After deposition off the eggs the weight of the female was 1051g. This clutch proved to be non fertile. Later that year a second clutch has been deposit by the same female.exciting.....

1.3 Hongkong II group (HKII)

In the period 2005-2007 six animals reported to be dead. Some died recently.

On average the animals are in good health.

It concerns a seizure of 44 animals of which 35 are alive today.

These animals are present on nine locations (7 in the Netherlands with 22 animals, 1 in Germany with 8 animals and 1 in United Kingdom with 4 animals). Recent investigations shows that as the years go by most of the animals seem to be male. There are several locations where the present animals all are male.

1.4 Seizure the Netherlands

Of the eight animals there are now seven alive. No characteristics have been further communicated, then that on one location all animals male are. The animals are present on two locations in the Netherlands.

2.0 Studbook population

On 31 December 2007 270 animals had been registered (53.51.171).

There are 207 (40.45.122) alive specimens.

3.0 Locations.

Current locations within the studbook have increased to a number of 41.

In the Netherlands (26), Belgium (8), Germany (4), United Kingdom (2) and France (1). At six locations there no living specimens present.

4.0 Births

Since 2005 births have been reported. The first report (2005) came out of a location in the Netherlands. On this location no more births have been occurred.

The year then (2006) births occurred at three locations (2 in the Netherlands and 1 in Belgium). Also last year (2007) these three locations had breeding successes. There have been 41 tortoises born since 2005. The expectation is that there will be an increase the coming years. A new location in United Kingdom, with adult animals, will stimulate this increase. We can conclude carefully that the number of births will increase. Not only within the studbook there are births but also outside the studbook. There are animals registered which are proven to be captive bred tortoises but the breeders do not take any part of this studbook. It concerns breeders from Germany and also the Netherlands. With these results it is proven that this species thrives in captivity and that they are well to keep.

Now we have to await the birth of second and third generation. I have knowledge of one location at which an animal of the second generation already deposited a clutch of eggs and that there is a clutch in the incubator.

5.0 Mortality

The mortality numbers in 2005 are high. Thirteen animals died. Within the HK I group only one death. Within the HKII group seven animals are reported death. Of the group of 60 animals confiscated in France only one animal died.

In 2006, one death was reported. It was an animal from the IBG group.

The year of 2007 one HKI and one HKII animal (unfortunately a female) were reported as a lost and three animals on private locations were reported as death..

6.0 Transfers

In 2006, and 2007 some transfers have taken place. In 2006 a total of seven animals (3 HKI and 4 HKII) have been transferred to an existing location within the studbook where already HKII animals had been housed. This transfer is done without knowledge of the studbook. The status of the animals is unknown at this moment. At time of writing this report this matter is being investigated. Within the HKII group in 2007 one transfer has taken place. It concerns here a male and female. With this transfer a new location was formed

By a transfer of a private collection of star tortoises one location has been lost and a new location is formed. It is a transfer of three adult animals.

Furthermore a private transfer has taken place of two animals between two existing locations.

7.0 Discussion

In the annual report of 2004 Peter Bulsing mentioned the efforts it needs to obtain the required information of studbook participants, mainly the information asked from TSA/ESF participants. There are still a few participants who haven't come forward with the requested data. This is in contradiction with the contract. Those who have HKI and HKII animals have the obligation to provide the studbook with the requested data concerning the status of the animals. This is an extremely bad matter.

The ESF must account for this animals and report to the TSA about the status of these confiscated animals (HKI, HKII).....It is an embarrassment.....

I have taken the effort to personally approach each TSA/ESF location. This has provided the studbook with photograph material and data regarding weight and length. I will intensify and improve the contact with the TSA/ESF this year.

What about the means of this studbook?

The studbook is not yet capable of providing the means of a breeding programme with ten individual bloodlines. Of all animals the origin (geographically) is unknown. Of some adult animals (locations) one speaks only of a suspected origin. This presumption can be used as a starting point. I have put myself to aim of collecting as much data as possible which, perhaps, can be supportive at determining the origin. I will approach studbook participants who have adult animals. Adult animals can provide valuable information and are easy to compare. It concerns data as; weight at first egg deposit, size and weight of the clutch, clutch size etc. I also want to purchase examination material such as photographs. Perhaps this provides information which can be used to determine the differences. May be it is useful... ..may be it is not helpful at all.

There are six locations with adult reproductive animals.

What is the usefulness of this studbook at this moment?

The birth that originates from this studbook is the alternative for wild captive and imported animals. Hopefully it will be noticed. If we want to reduce the purchases of wild captive and imported animals then the offer of captive bred animals is the answer. The studbook has a increasing number of captive bred star tortoises. Given the popularity of this species under tortoise holders, I do not expect that the studbook will advise to stop breeding (which is the case in some other studbooks). Or am I wrong? And will the constant import of wild captive (supposed farm bred) put a stop on breeding of this species. We will see.

Unfortunately this species is still smuggled in large numbers. Almost weekly to daily there is news about smuggling from the country(s) of origin. Especially animals which are smuggled to Malaysia are intercepted regularly. It is possible to buy little star tortoise in almost in every animal shop in Malaysia. But that will come to an end.

New wildlife law from March Tuesday January 29, 2008

Source :www.thestar.com

KUALA LUMPUR: The Indian star tortoise is an endangered species but it can be brought into Malaysia without a permit because there are no laws to prevent this. However, that will change in March when the animal is listed as a protected species in the country and the International Trade in Endangered Species Act 2007 (Flora and Fauna) is enforced.

“The new law makes our work easier,” said Natural Resources and Environment Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Sazmi Miah at the Second Asean Wildlife Enforcement Network Workshop on Task Force and Working Groups Development here yesterday. The penalties under the law would be tough, with a jail term of up to five years or a fine of up to RM100,000.

The Indian star tortoise is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which allows for trade but is regulated by a permit system. Malaysia is a signatory of CITES.

However, it is not in the protected species list under the Protection of Wildlife Act 1972. With the new law, authorities would also be able to take action against illegal traders who smuggle out Malaysia’s wild flora and fauna or bring in such items, or re-export them.

“The Act deals with transborder cases while domestic cases are charged under the Protection of Wildlife Act,” said Sazmi.

The International Trade in Endangered Species Act 2007 (Flora and Fauna) was passed in Parliament last month. To enforce the law and fight against trafficking of wildlife species, enforcement officers would be stationed at 17 official points of entry in the country, said Sazmi. “They will be trained and equipped with the necessary information,” he said, at the two-day workshop which began yesterday.

“We have been lagging in establishing this law but now we have done it,” he said.

Final

The studbook proves that the star tortoise a species which is easy to keep, if correctly housed and certain maintenance rules are obliged. With 210 live animals we have large group of animals which can provide lots of useful information. The studbook guarantees a healthy population in captivity

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Website van een Engelse deelnemer :

<http://www.startortoiseuk.co.uk/>