

Studbook breeding programme

CUORA MCCORDI

(McCords box turtle)



Photo by: Henk Zwartepoorte

Annual report 2010

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Introduction:

The critically endangered status of *Cuora mccordi* is reason for great concern. There is an ongoing discussion about possible sightings in the wild, however concrete information on this is not available. By many the species is supposed to be extinct in the wild. What is for sure is the fact that the captive population in both the USA and Europe is very small with few founder animals. Reproduction in Europe so far is only reported by the Munster Zoo in Germany and a very limited number of private breeders. The basis for this ESF studbook consists mainly of the three founder groups in the Munster Zoo and possibly a few privately born animals. All three groups at the Munster Zoo are producing offspring on a regular basis since 2004. Within the studbook population there are several specimens born at private locations; exact details on founder animals however are unknown. Positive element since the start of the studbook is the growth from 15 founder animals to a total of 61 specimens mainly caused by the good breeding results at the Munster Zoo. But the arrival during the past few years of 4 specimens born at private collections is very welcome so is the arrival of two new specimens from the Atlanta Zoo in the USA as an exchange with two Munster Zoo born specimens.

2. Studbook population:

March 2011 the total studbook population consists of 6.17.38 (61) specimens. This is a growth of the studbook population compared to December 31, 2010 of 12 specimens. Remarkable is the unequal balance between males and females. Certainly an increase of males would be very welcome.

3. Locations:

March 2011 the number of participants counts 10 collections including 3 zoos (Munster, Whipsnade and Rotterdam).

4. Births:

During 2010 10 specimens are born at the Munster Zoo. In the annual report 2008/2009 it was written that of the Munster Zoo births the exact dams and sires were unknown. Partly this is still true but by improvement of administration and communication within the Munster Zoo for a part the exact dams and sires could be traced although for another part the hatchlings still have so called mult parents as the animals are born in groups with several possible dams and sires. Of the 6 2009 born hatchlings all dams and sires are known. They are born from 4 dams and 2 sires. Of the 2010 born specimens of 4 both Dams and Sires are known, of 5 both Dams and Sires are Mult2 and of 2 the Sire is known but the Dams are Mult3. This is not a desirable situation but a negative side effect of keeping breeding groups instead of breeding pairs. At the same time splitting up good breeding groups is something not done so quickly.

5. Imports:

Two 2007 captive born females are imported into the EU. Both animals are born at the Atlanta Zoo in the United States and are exchanged for two captive born females from the Munster Zoo. This exchange of females was initiated by Ray Farrell from the Turtle Survival Alliance. Disappointing to note is the fact that the paperwork took around 4 years. Our thanks to Ray Farrell and the Atlanta Zoo for their cooperation. Perhaps this first exchange between the USA and Europe is a first step to improved future cooperation and exchanges of turtles.

6. Deaths:

During 2010 no deaths are reported.

7. Transfers:

During 2010 several transfers were carried out within the studbook. 4 specimens were transferred from the Munster zoo to 2 private participants (one already participating location and one new location) and 1 Atlanta Zoo born female was transferred from the Munster Zoo to the Rotterdam Zoo on March 1, 2011.

8. Discussions:

As indicated earlier the accurate assessment of all founder animals was not easy. However now all individual specimens are identified and photographed. Also the turtle administration of the Munster zoo is very well improved due to the great work of the Munster zoo conservation officer Martina Raffel and Elmar Meier. The studbook keeper established a good contact with TSA Cuora coordinator Ray Farrell in the USA who coordinated the exchange between the USA and Europe and was the TSA liaison with the Atlanta Zoo. Good

development is the involvement and cooperation with two more private keepers. The total number of current active participants (zoos and privates) increased to 7. 3 private keepers were just involved in the past through donating or exchanging of animals.

9. Activities planned for 2010:

1. Drafting and publishing husbandry and breeding guidelines. This action point was already included in former reports. But we definitely hope to carry it out this year.
2. Research for additional studbook specimens. This point is slowly improving. A few Munster zoo born animals were transferred to private collections creating zoo/private cooperation. How many private animals are kept outside the studbook is still unknown but it can be expected that as soon as private keepers become aware of the fact that species conservation is not just a zoo matter they will soon follow and seek contact with the ESF studbook.
3. Incubation temperature experiments with respect to producing males. These experiments are currently running and next year certainly results of these can be expected. In the USA experiments with *Cuora flavomarginata* egg incubation showed that incubation at 23 degrees Centigrade resulted in a majority of males.
4. Further improvement of the efforts exchanging specimens with TSA members in the USA. See under point 8. But given the difficult legal procedures this aim will remain difficult and slow.
5. Gathering and compiling of all relevant literature.
6. Completion of the studbook specimens photo archive. This aim is finished. All studbook specimens are photo documented.

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