

Studbook breeding program
Astrochelys radiata
(Radiated Tortoise)



Photo by Henk Zwartepoorte

Annual Report 2014

Sune Obsen, studbook keeper

Didier Laurent, co-studbook keeper

Henk Zwartepoorte, co-studbook keeper



European
Studbook
Foundation

KvK nr. 41136106

www.studbooks.eu

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Current living studbook population**
- 3. Locations**
- 4. Births**
- 5. Deaths**
- 6. Imports**
- 7. Transfers**
- 8. Situation in the wild**
- 9. Plans for 2015**

1. Introduction

The second annual report of the Studbook Breeding Program *Astrochelys radiata* is now finally ready. As this studbook is still rather new, and not yet has a large captive population registered in the studbook, and also only very few adult specimens registered the breeding results are still not that many. And still both the studbook keepers and the participants would need to focus on how to improve the communication on the status of each population at the participants. This is of course primarily a job for the studbook keepers to lift.

In order to improve the studbook manageable in terms of numbers of tortoises and contacts between participants and coordinator, we need to produce a more uniform routine to request for feedback from each studbook participant, for the most easy update for the studbook. With the many new participants assigning the studbook with each consignment of confiscated tortoises from East Asia we need to be clear on when and how we address the need for feedback, and what information we need from each participant.

The studbook still lacks adult breeding specimens although *Astrochelys radiata* appears to be present in Europe in larger numbers. This is vital for the studbook to produce results as a good adult population is important for a viable studbook. Almost all registered specimens in the studbook origin from confiscated animals, confiscated in Hong Kong and relocated to ESF *Astrochelys radiata* studbook participants and they still need some years before the specimens will be adult and start reproducing.

The coming year should hopefully lead to the finalization of husbandry guidelines, and more straight approaches to the way we communicate with the participants. In relation to the relocation of confiscated specimens the information flow is not easy with the authorities in the third country and also the studbook does not communicate with the authorities directly. So this information may not always flow easily.

We hope that everybody who are willing to participate in rehoming confiscated animals understand this, and realize that the communication is provided as soon as we have any concrete information to provide.

Within 2015 it is the ambition for the studbook to present you all with the first edition of the husbandry guidelines for *Astrochelys radiata*.

2. Current living studbook population

There are currently 108 live animals (2.4.102) at 27 locations registered in the studbook.

3. Locations

At the moment the *Astrochelys radiata* studbook is represented by 27 locations in the studbook that keep *Astrochelys radiata*. The locations are located in 6 different countries within Europe (The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, France, and Denmark).

Until now no reproduction activities have been announced.

The studbook keepers have started communicating with the participants on announcing the status at each participant. But only limited updates have been received. For the year 2015, the studbook will request for updates on the status at each participant around New Year, for the update of the studbook data. More will follow on this later this year.

4. Births

This chapter is still not providing the data that is the main purpose of this studbook. It should hopefully improve within the following years.

5. Deaths

1 animal died in 2014 (0.0.1)

The animal unfortunately had to be euthanized due to a prolapse.

6. Imports

51 animals were imported to the studbook in 2014, by rehoming of 47 animals from the seizure in Hong Kong and 4 from the Rotterdam Zoo.

The new animals are allocated with 14 to the Netherland, 6 to Belgium, 25 to United Kingdom, 6 to Ireland.

Another rehoming of confiscated animals was announced and participants volunteered to rehome animals. So far we have no confirmation on when the animals

will be shipped from Hong Kong to Europe. Hopefully within 2015 all paperwork would be ready and the animals will be transferred to Europe.

7. Transfers

There have been no transfers of specimens within the studbook in 2014.

8. Situation in the wild

The situation for *Astrochelys radiata* in the wild continues to decline. There are regularly reports on seized consignments of *Astrochelys radiata* among other reptiles from Madagascar either on their way out of Madagascar, or found during control when people try to bring in the consignments in countries around the world. Most seized consignments are for the Asian market, and there are now reports of *Astrochelys radiata* being the most common tortoise to be presented for sale on animals markets in Thailand. The situation is becoming very worrying these years as many hundreds of baby tortoises are smuggled out of Madagascar each month, and the adult tortoises are collected and killed to trade the meat within Madagascar. Information indicates that the populations of *Astrochelys radiata* continue to rapidly decline, and that the authorities in Madagascar don't manage to control the situation and to protect the wild populations of *Astrochelys radiata*.

So unfortunately there is no positive change in the situation that has been seen in Madagascar for the past ten years. On the contrary it seems still to become even more critical.

With the population being over exploited far beyond any sustainable collecting, and with the destruction of both populations and the habitats in Southern Madagascar it must be expected that the species will come closer to extinction each year, if the situation in Madagascar doesn't change.

9. Plans for 2015

- Preparation of the first edition of *Astrochelys radiata* husbandry guidelines.
- Further work on organization of the studbook.
- The starting of the information to the participants of the studbook, for better communication within the studbook, including the collection of data on the status as all locations of the studbook. The expected introduction of online registration at the end of 2014 or beginning 2015 will certainly improve data collecting.

All the best from
Didier Laurent, Henk Zwartepoorte, and Sune Obsen
