

Turtles on the Brink in Madagascar:

A Workshop on Current Status, Conservation Prioritization, and Strategic Action Planning for Madagascan Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles



*Antananarivo, Madagascar
13–18 January 2008*

Convened and Co-Hosted by

**Wildlife Conservation Society/Madagascar,
Conservation International/Madagascar,
and IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group**

Co-Sponsored by

**CI/Madagascar and WCS/Madagascar
in conjunction with**

**Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, IUCN/SSC Turtle Survival Alliance,
Turtle Conservation Fund, EAZA Shellshock Campaign,
Chelonian Research Foundation, Behler Chelonian Center,
and Malagasy Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts**

Workshop Rationale and Goals

Most of Madagascar's Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles (TFTs), especially its five endemic species, are increasingly threatened in their survival and need ongoing and expanded conservation action. Great progress has been made in recent years and decades, but major threats continue and appear to be worsening. A comprehensive up-to-date overview is urgently needed to develop a strategic conservation action plan to help prevent further deterioration in the status of Madagascar's TFTs.

This Workshop aims to compile and assess all currently available information on the status, threats, conservation actions to date, and required conservation actions for each of Madagascar's nine TFT species (11 taxa, including subspecies). Participants in the Workshop will contribute updated status information, review past and present conservation actions, identify current and anticipated threats, and collectively develop a comprehensive conservation action plan for Madagascar's TFTs.

We will synthesize this information into updated threat assessments for the IUCN Red List, using its globally recognized criteria to evaluate each taxon's current conservation status and its global conservation priority and significance. Building upon these status assessments and priorities, we will then take the conservation measures identified for each taxon and combine them into a conservation strategy for Madagascar's TFTs. We will identify individuals and organizations to lead specific conservation actions, and identify gaps where action is urgently needed yet no action is in place or as yet forthcoming, so that appropriate action can be taken. We will also initiate a broad-based Madagascar TFT Working Group of people focused on the conservation needs of Madagascar's TFTs in order to establish an on-going network for collaboration and facilitation of conservation action.

The overall goals of the workshop are thus:

- Inclusion of updated Red List evaluations for Madagascar's TFTs in the 2008 IUCN Red List;
- Development, publication and implementation of a Conservation Action Plan for Madagascar's TFTs;
- Establishment of a broad-based Madagascar TFT Working Group to collaborate and facilitate conservation action, including addressing conservation gaps and synergistic fundraising.

The specific deliverables of the workshop are:

- Revision of the Red List status assessments for Madagascar's TFTs;
- Formulation of conservation measures for each Madagascar TFT taxon as well as general conservation policy measures, and development of a clear understanding and agreement of identified responsibilities for conservation actions for Madagascar's TFTs;
- Facilitation of the formation of a broad-based collaborative Madagascar TFT Working Group to facilitate conservation action.

Preliminary Workshop Agenda

Day 1 (Jan 14). Current Research and Conservation Efforts.

Introductions and formal presentations on Madagascan tortoise and freshwater turtle research efforts and conservation activities of participating individuals and organizations, including conservation biology research, community programs, captive breeding programs, and trade data analysis. Review findings and recommendations from previous CAMP and PHVA analyses, and deforestation and habitat loss assessments.

Day 2 (Jan 15). Red List Status Updating.

Focused IUCN Red List status assessments and updated threat categorizations of all Madagascan tortoise and freshwater turtle species, with special emphasis on the five threatened endemics: *Astrochelys yniphora*, *A. radiata*, *Pyxis planicauda*, *P. arachnoides*, and *Erymnochelys madagascariensis*. Integrate pertinent data from previous CAMP and PHVA analyses.

Day 3 (Jan 16). Development of Conservation Strategies.

Identify and develop focused conservation actions needed for all Madagascan tortoise and freshwater turtle species. Integrate and update pertinent recommendations from previous CAMP and PHVA analyses.

Day 4 (Jan 17). Prioritization and Strategic Action Planning.

Synthesize and prioritize conservation needs into a strategic vision and focused Conservation Action Plan. Identify key partners and conservation opportunities for collaborative and focused approaches as well as capacity-building for long-term successful conservation of Madagascan tortoises and freshwater turtles.

Post-Workshop Deliverables

Publication of Action Plan.

Production and publication of a formal Workshop Proceedings and Conservation Action Plan (in professional hardcopy and digital pdf formats). To include documentation of research and conservation efforts, IUCN Red List status assessments, conservation prioritizations, and the strategic Conservation Action Plan. Production and publication undertaken by Chelonian Research Foundation and Conservation International.

IUCN Red List Assessments.

Formal review of the IUCN Red List status recommendations by the Red List Authority (IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group Steering Committee) and rapid submission to IUCN Species Programme for inclusion in the 2008 IUCN Red List.

Workshop Resources

to be prepared in advance [in bold] or already acquired [non-bold]

- **Red List assessment drafts** – all Madagascar TFT taxa (at species level, but information segregated by subspecies/ESU/etc. as appropriate). [Current 2007 IUCN Red List status for each species in brackets, with dates of last assessments by IUCN and previous CAMP recommendations]
 - *Astrochelys radiata* [VU, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date; CAMP recommended EN in 2001]
 - *Astrochelys yniphora* [EN, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date; CAMP recommended EN in 2001]
 - *Pyxis arachnoides* – *arachnoides*, *brygooi*, *oblonga* [VU, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date; CAMP recommended EN in 2001]
 - *Pyxis planicauda* [EN, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date; CAMP recommended CR in 2001]
 - *Kinixys belliana* [*belliana* or *domerguei*] [Not Listed, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date]
 - *Erymnochelys madagascariensis* [EN, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date; CAMP recommended CR in 2001]
 - *Pelusios castanoides castanoides* [Not Listed, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date]
 - *Pelusios subniger subniger* [Not Listed, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date]
 - *Pelomedusa subrufa* [Not Listed, last assessed by IUCN in 1996, now out-of-date]
- **Madagascar Region TFT Identification guide** – CI Tropical Pocket Guide Series – Thomas Leuteritz, Justin Gerlach, et al.
- Previous reports and evaluations: CAMP (2001, *A. radiata*, *A. yniphora*, *P. arachnoides*, *P. planicauda*, *E. madagascariensis*) and PHVA (2005, *A. radiata*, *P. arachnoides*)
- **Bibliography of Madagascar TFTs** - Thomas Leuteritz
- **Compilation CD-ROM of Madagascar TFT papers**
 - Including all CITES documents relating to recent Madagascar turtle listings, significant trade (*Pyxis*) and Country-based Significant Trade process.
- **Institutional profile and turtle activities summaries** – prepared as presentations for the Workshop, submitted also as short written documents before Workshop; revised and edited versions to be incorporated into Proceedings / Action Plan
- **Background information on environmental issues and trends in Madagascar** – forest loss, land use trends, socioeconomic and cultural processes
- Deforestation map(s) – CI
- **Summary Bibliography** of Madagascar environmental conservation literature

Workshop Logistics

- *Venue:* Antananarivo Carlton (former Hilton) Hotel, Antananarivo, Madagascar
- *Dates:* Arrival and check-in Sunday 13 January 2008, Workshop opens Monday AM, 14 January, closes Thursday PM 17 January, departure and check-out Friday 18 January [dates do not incorporate possible field trips]
- *Field trips:* small group excursions hopefully to be arranged pre- or post-workshop to visit various tortoise and turtle field sites. Details pending.
- *Language:* workshop working language: English, with professional translation to/from French.
- *Workshop Rapporteur:* from CI or WCS, not a technical participant.
- *Social events:* One or two informal evening sessions or receptions at the beginning and end of the workshop are contemplated. This would allow explaining the scope and purpose of the workshop to a large number of interested people from the government, NGOs, academics and media, and to publicize an outline of the workshop findings and conclusions.

Workshop Organizing Committee

Co-chair: Herilala Randriamahazo, WCS/Madagascar

Co-chair: Peter Paul van Dijk, CI, TFTSG

Anders Rhodin, TFTSG, CRF

Thomas Leuteritz, TFTSG

Richard Lewis, Durrell

Russell Mittermeier, CI

Helen Crowley, WCS/Madagascar

James MacKinnon, CI/Madagascar

Luca Luiselli, TFTSG

Workshop Participants and Invitees (partial listing)

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Leuteritz, Thomas – TFTSG
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