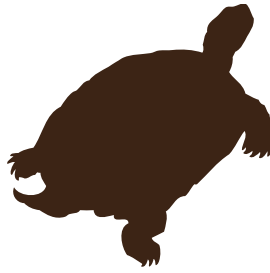


ISSN 0265-5411



**BCG**

**BRITISH CHELONIA GROUP**

PATRON: PROFESSOR DAVID J. BELLAMY OBE

**NEWSLETTER NO. 204**

**NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2011 ISSUE**



The Flat-tailed Tortoise (Kapidolo)  
(*Pixys planicauda*)

For tortoise, terrapin and turtle care and conservation.

Company Limited by Guarantee (England and Wales) No. 07541800. Registered Charity No. 1140830  
The British Chelonia Group. Registered Office: Cowley Cottage, 1 High Street, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire SN15 4RE

[www.britishchelonigroup.org.uk](http://www.britishchelonigroup.org.uk)

## EDITORIAL

Copy dates for 2012;

1<sup>st</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> March,

1<sup>st</sup> May, 1<sup>st</sup> July,

1<sup>st</sup> September, 1<sup>st</sup> November

Copy should be sent before the appropriate date to:

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H.Fenwick

New Barn Farmhouse

Toft Road, Kingston

Cambs CB23 2NS

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Colour pictures 1,4,5,13,16, 20.

Centrefold: Membership application form

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

**Spring Symposium 10th March 2012**

Venue: MILTON KEYNES OPEN  
UNIVERSITY

May we have your veterinary questions  
for the veterinary corner? Direct these  
directly to our VLO, Kevin Eatwell

(e-mail: [kevineatwell1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kevineatwell1@hotmail.co.uk))  
or to the Newsletter Editor.

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*Any views expressed in the BCG Newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor or the British Chelonia Group.*

## **CONSERVATION CORNER**

### **THE 2012 CONSERVATION APPEAL**

#### **Madagascan Tortoise Appeal**

The tortoises in Madagascar are in need of your help! Their plight is serious; without intervention species such as the Ploughshare could be extinct in the wild within two decades.

The two species the British Chelonia Group would like support are the Flat-tailed Tortoise (*Pyxis planicauda*) or Kapidolo and the Angonoka or Ploughshare Tortoise (*Astrochelys yniphora*).

The Flat-tailed Tortoise has been successfully bred by Durrell at Ampijoroa for several years and the plan is to release some of these captive bred tortoises in Menabe next year. These animals will need to be health screened, transported to the pre-release pens so that they can be monitored easily and then radio tagged so that they can be tracked. The radio tracking is particularly important to help gain information about how the Kapidolo use the new habitat and so inform future release programmes.

The Angonoka and Kapidolo are under attack on several fronts. Their habitat is being destroyed through deforestation; in addition to the 'slash and burn' agricultural practices still operated by many villages, vast areas of forest are being felled for charcoal or for oil exploration. The numbers of both species are being rapidly reduced through hunting and being sold as 'bush meat' in markets. As endangered species the Angonoka and Flat-tailed Tortoises have been targeted by poachers for the illegal pet trade. Ploughshare Tortoises can easily fetch £2000 each in the South East Asian markets and, as these tortoises do not reach sexual maturity until they are at least 15 years old, their numbers are drastically reducing. There are only 500 Ploughshare Tortoises in the wild; this critically endangered species is now the rarest tortoise in the world.

Poachers are apprehended and the tortoises are being seized but cannot be released until they have been quarantined, health screened and a suitable site for their release selected. The BCG would like to contribute towards the cost of these vital quarantine areas which are desperately needed.

Durrell have been working hard with communities in areas where it is suitable to release either the Flat-tailed Tortoise or the Ploughshare Tortoise. Through education and encouragement local villages are being involved in the monitoring and protection of these rare animals. Durrell have also helped to get the Baly Bay region designated as a national park and are working with local communities, involving them in the practical work of protecting the tortoises in their area.

Organisations have been working for many years to save these animals. Durrell's captive breeding station at Ampijoroa now has a well-established breeding programme for Ploughshare Tortoises, and have already released into the wild

animals that have been reared in captivity.

The British Chelonia Group sponsored the successful release of Angonoka Tortoises into the Baly bay region in 2008 and there is now a project to release 44 more animals into this area.



Madagascar is a very special country; the animals are unique and they need to be preserved for future generations. We are hoping to raise at least £5000 towards these projects.

**Please help! The Madagscan Flat-tailed Tortoise and the Ploughshare Tortoise really do need your support if they are to survive in the wild.**

If you want to make a donation you can do so when renewing your membership by adding the amount to the form or you can send a separate donation by cheque. Please make your cheque out to The BRITISH CHELONIA GROUP and specify that you would like your donation to go to the Conservation Appeal. Please send your cheque to:

**Membership Secretary BCG, PO Box 16216, Tamworth, B77 9LA**

**ANNE ROWBERRY, CONSERVATION OFFICER**

And thank you on behalf of the Endangered Madagascan Tortoises

*(Please be aware that if for any reason the money donated cannot be used for this appeal the BCG will use the money to support similar chelonian conservation projects.)*



The Angonoka or Ploughshare Tortoise of Madagascar (*Geochelone yniphora*)

Photograph: Hasina Bandri Amanampisoa

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### New Record for *Pelusios adansonii*



**Mr Thomas Diagne** recorded a *Pelusios adansonii* female who reached 4.5. lbs. weight from Lac de Guiers Tocc Tocc Wildlife Refuge.

According to the literature related to this species it is the biggest weight ever recorded.

**JOHN CHITTY** BvetMed CertZooMed MRCVS  
**JC EXOTIC PET CONSULTANCY LTD**

Wombourne, Allington, Salisbury, Wilts SP4 0DD

e-mail [jkre42@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jkre42@tiscali.co.uk) Tel 07775796432



## PUZZLE CORNER

Within the word box are most of the letters of the alphabet. Find out which ones are missing, and re-arrange those letters into a type of land tortoise.

R	W	B	H	X	S
C	U	J	O	K	V
Z	D	F	Q	L	M

*For the answers see the small advertisements page*

## CAPE VERDE

*A young member writes:*

Dear Editor,

I would like to tell the Newsletter about the baby turtle my Dad adopted for me when he went to Cape Verde in August, on the west coast of Africa. Its name is Princess Jasmine and it went safely into the sea on 5th September. This is a picture of my Loggerhead Turtle hatchling on its way across the beach.

Eggs are taken from the nests on the beach to the safety of the hatchery, where thousands of hatchlings are produced. When they are ready they are guided to the ocean, away from the tourists' lights that might make them go the wrong way.

Cape Verde is a very important nesting place for Loggerhead Turtles, but there are lots of threats from people, especially when they drive their quad bikes on the beach. So adopting a hatchling helps them to survive by supporting the hatchery.



*Jessica Tilley-Moore*

## **NEWS FROM THE REGIONS AFFILIATED GROUPS**

### **LEICESTER TORTOISE SOCIETY (EAST MIDLANDS GROUP)**

Regional Chairperson:

Jackie Tel 01858-431294 For further information phone the numbers given.

Jill Tel 01509 553644

All our events are now on our regional website:

[www.leicestershirevillages.com/blaby/leicester-tortoise-society](http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/blaby/leicester-tortoise-society)

All meetings take place on the first Thursday of the month at Blaby Social Centre.

### **WEST MIDLANDS GROUP**

Regional Chairman:

Mr G Spears

Tel 01584 881338

All members are welcome to our meetings. Regional members will be notified as usual.

Please contact George for further information on meetings.

### **THE SOUTH WEST GROUP**

Tel Sue on 01275-333062.

Both members and non-members are welcome at all our meetings and events. For further information please phone Sue Gallop, the Regional Chairperson or Treasurer Pete 01460 77268. Pete has set up an e-mail for reminders or any changes in details, if you wish to receive these please send "subscribe" to [bcgswnews@googlemail.com](mailto:bcgswnews@googlemail.com)

The meetings held in Clutton Hall are provisional, so please confirm with Sue on the number above.

We held the annual "Weigh-In" in October and with all set up and ready we had a steady day checking one hundred and seventy six tortoises. Many owners were commenting on their tortoises' behaviour after the unseasonably warm spell we had just had.

Also in October, Sue gave a very interesting talk on Turtles in the Carribean, including the Turtle Farm, tobogganing and various other wildlife from the islands. Thank you Sue. The last date for your diary is the 11th December, Christmas Party. Contact Sue above

### **MERSEYSIDE GROUP**

Regional Chairman:

Mr R.Webster, Tel 0151 342 51 48

For all further information and future meetings please ring the number above or e-mail [regswester@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:regswester@yahoo.co.uk)

## **THE NORTH**

Regional Chairman:

Mr J.Thorpe, 10 Haslam Street, Bury, Lancs. BL9 6EQ.

Tel 0161-7647078

Any member who wishes to be informed about evens please contact John above.

## **INFORMAL GROUPS**

### **SURREY GROUP**

Contact Pat on 020 8399 2078 or Alison on 020 8943 3574

For further information please contact the people above. Alternatively please e-mail surreytort@btinternet.com for details or to register your interest in future events. Everyone welcome.

### **KENT/SE LONDON GROUP *“Just Me and My Tortoise”***

Tel Wendy on 020 8462 9920 The Kent and SE London informal BCG Group have informal coffee afternoons every two months: April, June, August, October and December. We aim to meet up for an informal chat on topics like diet, hibernation husbandry etc. For further information contact Wendy above.

### **STAFFS/DERBYS GROUP**

Tel/Fax Paul or Joy on 01827 700227 e mail:tamtort@ntlworld.com

For further information on future meetings phone the number above. “Paul and Joy would like to thank everyone for their continued help and support over the last year and a special thank you to Sue, Penny, Eddie, Richard, Jenny, Jill and Josh. We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2012.”

### **CARAPACE (WALES AND THE MARCHES)**

Please contact David Lloyd Rees on 01792 790828 for further details and offers of help. (Mobile:7790 923963). Postal address: 28 Y Llwyni, Pendant, Morrision, Swansea City and County of Swansea. SA6 6BL, South Wales.

### **DEVON/CORNWALL GROUP**

Tel Jenny 01395-279827

For the next meeting's programme please contact Jenny above.

### **CHESHIRE GROUP**

Tel Anne 01625 877865 or anne.tortuga@btinternet.com

For further information on meetings please contact Anne on 07891 283753 or Julia on 01260 270307 between 8a.m. – 6p.m. Mon.-Fri.

**The Annual Tortoise Day 2012** event has already been booked and will be on May 19th 2012 at the same venue. Further details will be available in early 2012 from Anne or Julia above.



## PETERBOROUGH AND DISTRICT TORTOISES

A group set up to support tortoise owners and promote correct care of tortoises. Meetings are regularly arranged. Information from Christine on 01733 576275 or try the website; <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/peterborough-and-district-tortoises>.

## NORFOLK TORTOISE CLUB

Working to improve welfare of tortoises in captivity through meetings and events with a friendly and knowledgeable team. Support and advice given on all aspects of keeping including rescue and re-homing. Special events throughout the year include lectures, shows, health checks and information days. Monthly meetings in Norwich, 3rd Wednesday of each month at St. Francis Church Hall, Rider Haggard Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 0UQ, All experience levels welcome. More information please visit [www.tortoiseclub.org](http://www.tortoiseclub.org) or e mail: [norfolktortoiseclub@gmail.com](mailto:norfolktortoiseclub@gmail.com) or call Eleanor Tel 01508 570984. Mobile: 07799 688798

## SUSSEX GROUP

Of interest to members in this area, THE SUSSEX CHELONIA SOCIETY is a welfare organisation for members living in the Sussex area. It holds regular meetings and issues newsletters. For more information contact Sheila on 01273 475680.

## WILTSHIRE GROUP

For more information on further meetings please contact Lisa on 01380 725663. We are hoping to hold our next meeting early next Spring, details will follow later. E-mail [lisatort@btinternet.com](mailto:lisatort@btinternet.com) or phone (see above).

<b>Exotic Animal Centre</b>	
<b>Martin P. C. Lawton</b> <i>B.Vet.Med.; Cert.V.Ophthalm.; Cert.L.A.S.; C.Biol.; M.F.Biol.; F.R.C.V.S</i> RCVS Specialist in Exotic Animal Medicine	<b>Lynne C. Stoakes</b> <i>B.Vet.Med.; M.R.C.V.S.</i>
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12 Fitzilian Avenue, Harold Wood, Romford, Essex, RM3 0QS Located just off Junction 28, M25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✦ Isoflurane Anaesthesia</li><li>✦ Radiography &amp; Ultrasonography</li><li>✦ Flexible &amp; Rigid Endoscopy</li><li>✦ Operating Microscopes</li><li>✦ Microsurgery, Radiosurgery</li><li>✦ Blood testing, Faecal analysis</li><li>✦ Computerised Practice</li><li>✦ Staff trained in exotic animal nursing</li></ul>
<small>Members of The British Veterinary Zoological Society The Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians The Association of Avian Veterinarians</small>	Dedicated Exotic Animal Ward, with purpose built Hospital Vivaria and Cages.
<b>TEL : 01708 384444      FAX : 01708 344318</b>	

## SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

Members are advised that for the sale, hire, exchange or barter of some Mediterranean tortoises (Spur-thighed, Hermann's, Marginated and Egyptian Tortoises) as well as the Pancake Tortoises a licence is required. This licence is obtainable from Wildlife Licensing and Registration Service, Animal Health, (Zone 1/17), Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EB. Tel 0117 372 8774. Website: [wildlife.licensing@animalhealth.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wildlife.licensing@animalhealth.gsi.gov.uk) The cost per clutch is £25. The Editor regrets that advertisements not quoting an individual number cannot be accepted.

*Members are also advised to observe adequate quarantine procedures when introducing new animals to their existing stock and separate male and female tortoises to avoid the females being molested or suffering stress. Anyone selling hatchlings is urged to ask enquirers for their B.C.G. membership number and to make sure the animals are not bought for resale.*

### BOOKS:

“**GIANT TORTOISES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN**” by J. Gerlach (£30.00) and “**FAMOUS TORTOISES**” also by J. GERLACH (£10.00) can be ordered directly by making out a cheque or postal order to J. Gerlach and sending it to J. Gerlach, 133 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge, CB1 7BX.

A book for young children, written and illustrated by RON GERLACH, the former Conservation Officer of Silhouette island, Seychelles, can also be ordered from Justin Gerlach. This book is called: “**THE TORTOISE WHO THOUGHT HE WAS A DODO**”. Price: £10.00. All prices are incl. p&p.

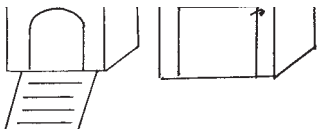
“**QUASIMODO**” the story of a tortoise with colour plates for young children.

Cheques for £6.50, including postage, to:

Mrs. A. Martin, Maison du Pré, La Rue Mont Marché, Forest, Guernsey, GY8 0HB.

**FOR SALE: TORTOISE HOUSES.** Extremely hard wearing, marine ply construction, raised off the ground, removable floor, hinged lid, door/ramp. Finished in yacht enamel.

Tel Diana Scott 01249 652998. E-mail [diana.scott1@btconnect.com](mailto:diana.scott1@btconnect.com) Pick up preferred, delivery by arrangement if sufficient quantity.

	Large	Regular	Small	(front “open”) ( front “closed”)
Floor area	18” x 36”	18” x 20”	12½” x 15”	
Door width	13½”	10”	7½”	
Door height	11”	7”	6½”	
Cost	£100	£60	£45	



# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM 2012

## **Please Note:**

**Your Membership Subscription year runs from either:  
1st January, 1st April, 1st July or 1st October.**

### **Membership Subscription via Direct Debit**

Members who pay by direct debit will be contacted in due course and asked to fill in a new direct debit application form. New members who wish to pay by direct debit please tick the box on your membership application and a form will be sent to you.

Your direct debit will be collected on your set month and the amount will depend on your type of membership. A full list of current types of membership and annual subscription rates is shown overleaf.

### **THE BCG CONSERVATION APPEAL FOR THE YEAR 2012 IS:**

#### **The Madagascan Tortoise Appeal**

For tortoise, terrapin and turtle care and conservation.

Company Limited by Guarantee (England and Wales) No. 07541800. Registered Charity No. 1140830  
The British Chelonia Group. Registered office: Cowley Cottage, 1 High Street, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire SN15 4RE  
[www.britishcheloniagroup.org.uk](http://www.britishcheloniagroup.org.uk)

## Types of Membership

## Annual Subscription Rates

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1. United Kingdom   |        |
| (a) Individual Membership   | £13.00 |
| (b) Family Membership<br>(2 Adults at the same address and their children under 18) | £18.00 |
| (c) Individual Contributing Membership  | £18.00 |
| (d) Family Contributing Membership  | £23.00 |
| 2. Senior Citizen (UK Only), Regular & Family                                       | £10.00 |
| 3. Overseas - Please pay in Pounds Sterling only                                    | £25.00 |

*Contributing Membership includes a £5 donation to BCG funds. This extra income will be used as grants to Tortoise, Turtle and Terrapin studies or conservation projects throughout the world, to purchase material for publication and to support other chelonian projects as agreed by the Trustee Directors.*

*This £5 is separate from the Annual Appeal.*

*Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to*

***The British Chelonia Group***

*and sent to:-*

The Membership Secretary

British Chelonia Group

P.O. Box 16216

Tamworth

B77 9LA

If you wish to pay your subscription by **Direct Debit**, this can be arranged by completing the section over.

**If you are renewing your membership please enclose a 9 x 6.5 inch Stamped Addressed Envelope if you wish to receive an up-to-date Membership Information Booklet.**

**Please complete all boxes in block capitals**

(Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/ Dr/ Prof)	First Name:	Surname:
Address:		
Town:	County:	
Post Code:	Tel No (inc STD code)	E-mail:
<b>GIFT AID</b> I am a UK taxpayer, and I wish the BCG to treat as Gift Aid Donations all membership subscriptions and donations I have paid since 6/4/2000, and all membership subscriptions and donations I make from the date of this declaration. (Remember to notify the BCG if you change your address or no longer pay income tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations.)		
Signature		Date
Membership Type (Circle type required)	1a	1b
	1c	1d
	2	3
New Member <input type="checkbox"/>	Membership Fee .....	
Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>	Yearly Appeal Donation .....	
Membership No:.....	Total (enclosed or to be debited on a yearly basis) .....	

**DIRECT DEBIT**

The British Chelonia Group will be allocated a new SUN (Subscriber User Number).

Members who pay by Direct Debit will be contacted in due course and asked to fill in a new direct debit form.

New members who wish to pay by direct debit please tick this box  and a form will be sent to you.

SPECIES KEPT (Please complete)	ADULT 11 YEARS AND OVER		JUVENILES 5-11 YEARS		HATCHLINGS 0-5 YEARS
	M	F	M	F	
	Hermann's Tortoise ( <i>Testudo hermanni</i> )				
Spur-thighed Tortoise ( <i>Testudo graeca</i> )					
Horsfield Tortoise ( <i>Testudo horsfieldi</i> )					
Marginated Tortoise ( <i>Testudo marginata</i> )					
Leopard Tortoise ( <i>Stigmochelys pardalis</i> )					
Sulcata Tortoise ( <i>Geochelone sulcata</i> )					
Others (please state species)					

1. Are you willing to accept unwanted Chelonia?
  - (A) Tortoises..... YES / NO
  - (B) Terrapins ..... YES / NO
  
2. Do you have facilities to accept sick / injured / blind Chelonia?
  - (A) Tortoises..... YES / NO
  - (B) Terrapins ..... YES / NO



**FOR SALE** under licence, captive-bred Hermann's Tortoises under 100mm. 2010/2011 hatchlings all sold with DEFRA certificates. All proceeds to charity. Please contact Sally on 023 9225 3213 or [sally@sgl3.co.uk](mailto:sally@sgl3.co.uk) (south of England).

## **PUZZLE CORNER**

The answer to the puzzle: **EGYPTIAN**

**Correction:** The Picture Gallery in Newsletter 203 contained photographs from the late Sid Bailey Collection. The photo credit of the actual pictures displayed should in fact have been attributed to Vic Merrill.

## **KAY GRAY MEMORIAL AWARD:**

Nominations of candidates for the Kay Gray award should reach the

**BCG Vice Chair, c/o P.O.Box 1176,  
Chippenham, Wilts  
SN15 4RE**

by 1st February 2012.

## **LOST/STOLEN TORTOISE REPORTS**

**JOHN HAYWARD coordinator of the NATIONAL THEFT REGISTER,  
ZOOLOGICAL WILDLIFE INVESTIGATIONS.**

**Tel/Fax 01869 325699 mobile:07802 404929**

**Pager: 07626 120425 e-mail: [jh@ntr.supanet.com](mailto:jh@ntr.supanet.com)**

**For all security and crime prevention advice  
and CITES licensing queries please call John above.**

## **BCG RE-HOMING**

I usually have terrapins looking for good homes, especially Red-eared and Yellowbellies. I also have tortoises from time to time, both Mediterranean and exotics. If you are interested please contact me on 01249 720675 (or e-mail: [marytort@hotmail.com](mailto:marytort@hotmail.com)). It would help me greatly and indeed improve efficiency if you could reply to my e-mail address so that I can build up an address book in order that I can contact everyone more quickly. So e-mail [marytort@hotmail.com](mailto:marytort@hotmail.com) giving your name, address, telephone number, e mail address, BCG membership number (see label of your Newsletter) and the kind of animal you can place and the facilities offered. The BCG operates a re-homing scheme with appropriate adoption forms and keeps records of all the re-homed animals.

**Mary Datson, Stocklist Officer**

**British Chelonia Group, P.O. Box 1176, Chippenham, Wilts. SN15 4RE**

## **NEWSROUND**

### **From: THE 2012 TURTLE SURVIVAL ALLIANCE (TSA) ANNUAL PUBLICATION**

#### **CHINA (1):**

A workshop in Singapore during February 2011 evaluated the past ten years of the Asian Turtle Crisis. One of the results from the workshop was sobering : of the 86 Asian species of chelonia 38% are now critically endangered (CR). It was only 20% in 1999.

Fifty seven species, 60% are considered CR or Endangered, which is a 40% increase since 1999.

These figures are likely to grow worse as the food and pet markets in China continue to drain wild population.

The high volume trade in both the Asian Mountain Tortoises and Arakan Forest Turtles for food is disturbing. Pet shops widely sell large numbers of small forest turtles (*Cuora galbinifrons*, *C. bourreti*, *C. mouhotii*). The animals sold have little hope of survival in inexperienced hands or without veterinary care.

The high volume trade in the Arakan Forest Turtles (see picture opposite middle of page) and Asian Mountain Turtles is disturbing (Both these chelonia species were the subject of the 2010 BCG Appeal).

#### **CHINA (2):**

##### **Breeding attempts of *Rafetus swinhoei* (the Giant Soft-shelled River Turtle)**

The BCG Newsletter has regularly reported on the plight of the *Rafetus swinhoei*, the Giant Soft-shelled River Turtle, and the attempts to save it for the future. (See 2008, Newsletters 182 and 184).

A breeding programme was started at Suzhou Zoo in China with the last known female of its kind, originally from Changsha Zoo.

A special enclosure was built and a male introduced. A first clutch was produced in 2009 which was about 75% infertile and all the fertilised eggs then died at various stages of development.

A second clutch in 2010 was about 93% infertile and in 2011 all eggs (100%) appeared to be infertile. This is a disappointing result, especially since improvements have been implemented on nutrition. Glass barriers around the large breeding pond have been built with funds from the China Government and a larger beach has been made available.

Work is in hand for implementation of a filtration system (reed bed filters) to improve the water quality.

Pet shops widely sell large numbers of small forest turtles, amongst them the *Cuora galbinifrons* (see picture below)



An Arakan Forest Turtle (*Heosemys depressa*).



Picture of the *Rafetus swinhoei* from Newsletter 184

There are at present only four live *Rafetus swinhoei* specimens known in the world. Two are in Vietnam and two in China. Discussions on future cooperation have started for the long term conservation of the species. The first step is a study of the genetic make up at Yantze Zoo of the two animals in China and the two Red River specimens from Vietnam.

A new survey will be mounted in China (Yunnan) to try to find wild specimens.

**From: Newsletter 182, 2008**

This is the Giant Soft Shell Turtle who lives alone in an inner-city lake in Hanoi, Vietnam. So scarce were his appearances that, until recently, he was thought to be a genie. But amateur video footage of the mysterious creature, taken in 1998, finally dispelled the myths. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese specimen is not compatible with his Chinese cousins for breeding purposes. Scientists hope there is still a chance of finding more of these animals in Vietnam's Red River floodplain and there are plans to build an artificial beach at the lake to encourage breeding, but till another one of his species is found this turtle will remain the loneliest animal in the world.



From: Newsletter 182, 2008

## **SIGNIFICANT BREEDINGS**

### **USA:**

Knoxville Zoo has managed to hatch their first Southern Spider Tortoise (*Pixys a.oblonga*). This represents only the sixth known hatching of this subspecies.

The protocol used was placing the eggs for three months at 29 degrees Celsius followed by two months at 18 degrees and then at 29 degrees again.

During the last stage of incubation the egg box was opened once per week and lightly spray-misted. After 145 days the egg pipped.

### **THE NETHERLANDS:**

Rotterdam Zoo has managed to breed six Burmese Star Tortoises (see picture overleaf) from a sub-adult pair received from a confiscated shipment in December 2001.

Three out of a clutch of four hatched after an incubation period of 150 days in 2009 and three out of a clutch of five hatched after 152 days.

This is a significant contribution to the European Studbook Foundation breeding programme.

### **AUSTRIA:**

Vienna Zoo made international headlines with the first hatching of the Northern River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*) outside their natural range.

In February 2010 two female Northern River Terrapins arrived at the zoo and radiographic tests showed that both females were gravid.

The eggs were artificially induced (17 from one and 13 from the other female), divided in three groups and exposed to different temperature regimes for each group.

The 13 eggs from the second female proved to be infertile, but from the 17 of the other one, two turtles hatched.

These were both from the group exposed to a temperature of 29.5 degrees Celsius. One year later both animals appear to be in good health.

For Vienna Zoo the conservation of *B.baska* has become one of its most important projects. During the zoo's conservation event, "The Conservation Days" in August 2010, facts about the Northern River Terrapin were presented to more than 30.000 visitors.





A Burmese River Turtle (*Batagur baska*)

*Photo: the late Sid Bailey Collection*



One of the Burmese Star Tortoises born at Rotterdam Zoo

*Photograph: H.Zwartpoorte*

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## A LIFE TIME WITH “TORTIE” - part 10

2005.....

### Wilstead, Beds.

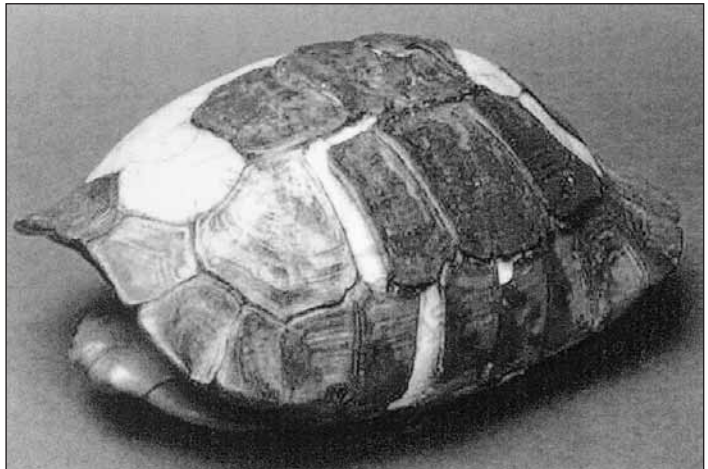
Another very interesting year.

At the age of ten in 1948 when I purchased Tabitha, then called Toby, I only assumed she was male.

For 53 years she had never seen a Vet so I must have fed her correctly with the right variety of food, hibernated her successfully over the winter months and her freedom over the years had given her plenty of exercise. In 2001 when she had her cloacae organ prolapse it was a little embarrassing to be told by the Vet that Toby was not Toby at all and that he had renamed him Tabitha. We don't really know what caused the problem but thankfully she made a full recovery and is still going strong and giving so much pleasure to all those who know and love her. Coming into contact and looking after so many tortoises in connection with our house-sitting I have learnt so much in such a short space of time about tortoises. The different species and subspecies and countries of origin. Better late than never is an expression that immediately comes to mind. I have always felt there was something different about Tabitha and not only because I am biased. She is a very pale cream colour, her head has distinct yellow markings, she has very large strong back legs and the two spurs on the sides of her thighs are cream in colour and look as though they have been cut off. I've always believed her to be the Greek Mediterranean Spur-thighed Tortoise (*Testudo graeca graeca*). Now I am thinking differently. In our travels, someone who keeps tortoises and hatchlings saw her and exclaimed “Oh..

you have a “Whitei” (*Testudo Whitei*).

A name I had never heard of before. I didn't have a clue what it was all about



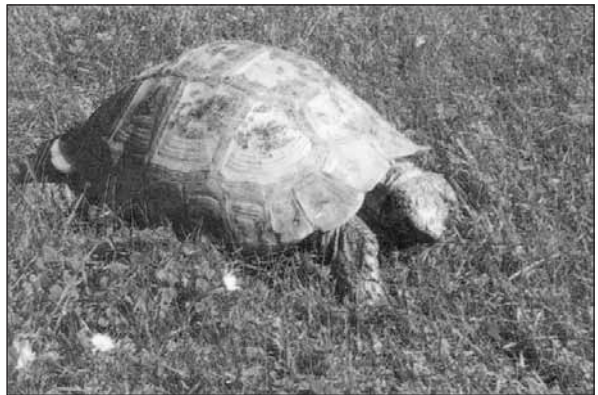
The shell of Timothy, Gilbert White's tortoise, as on display at the Natural History Museum.

so I began to research the “*Whitei*”, the description of which certainly resembles Tabitha. The genus is not recognised and was placed in the genus (*Furculachelys*) by A C Highfield in 1989. *Testudo Whitei* goes back to the 1700’s and was first described by Bennett 1836 receiving the name after the naturalist and explorer Gilbert White’s Tortoise “Timothy, a famous and not to be forgotten tortoise” Gilbert White inherited Timothy from his aunt, Mrs Rebecca Snooke, after her death in 1780, who originally acquired Timothy in about 1740 from a sailor friend of her husband in Chichester, Sussex for half a crown. Prior to Gilbert White having the tortoise it had lived for 30 years with his widowed aunt. *Timothy* died in 1794. Gilbert White was born in 1720 and died in 1793 so Timothy outlived him by one year. The shell of Timothy is on display in the Natural History Museum and being so old looks a little battered. Dr. Colin McCarthy, of the Zoology Department, gave me permission to print the enclosed photograph.

I have no wish to enter the confusion surrounding the *Whitei* or enter into the disagreement on the matter.

However I can make my own decisions on my observations on the tortoises I have looked after. I feel many people today may have a *Whitei*, but like me they don’t know it.

Tabitha is a large, elongated, and pale yellow coloured tortoise. She has always been very calm and collected and knows her whereabouts and if in doubt she stops and works things out before moving on. She is a real sun worshipper and knows exactly where it is or should be at any given place or time.



The females seem to have survived better than the males.

Our tortoise Tabitha

Is there a male *Whitei* somewhere?

It would be good to know.



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**THE BCG MANAGEMENT TEAM  
WISHES ALL MEMBERS  
A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND A  
PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**





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# The BCG SPRING SYMPOSIUM 2012

This will take place at

Milton Keynes Open University, Milton Keynes, Bucks on

**Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012.**

**11.00am to 18.00pm**

## **THEME: CHELONIAN NEWS UPDATE**

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- **DR JUSTIN GERLACH** PhD, MA; Dphil; FRGS of the Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles, who will give a lecture in two halves: ***“The End of the Seychelles Giant Tortoise Project”*** and ***“An Overview of Early Turtle Evolution: from 220 million years ago to somewhere nearer the present day”***
- **MR MARTIN LAWTON**, B.Vet.Med; Cert.V.Ophthal; Cert.L.A.S; Cbiol, MSA, DZooMed, FRCVS. A practising veterinary surgeon and exotic animal specialist will be speaking on ***“Chelonia Respiration in Sickness and in Health”***.
- **Ms EMMA WOOD**, BSc, of the University of Exeter, who will give a lecture in two halves: ***“Marine Turtle Conservation in Northern Cyprus”*** and ***“A New Tool for Regulating the U.K. Tortoise Trade”***.

Cost £25.00 per person inclusive of buffet, tea and coffee, payable to: **The British Chelonia Group.**

Further information from **BCG SYMPOSIUM ORGANISER**, P.O.Box 16216, Tamworth, B77 9LA or e-mail: [symposium@ntlworld.com](mailto:symposium@ntlworld.com)

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