

PRESS RELEASE

European zoos and aquaria join forces to fight turtle and tortoise conservation crisis

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) officially closed its fourth annual conservation campaign **Shellshock, the EAZA Turtle & Tortoise Campaign 2004/5**, in September 2005. Over the past year the 297 member zoos and aquaria of this European regional association have worked together to fight the conservation and welfare crisis that the world's turtles and tortoises currently face.

Various activities were organised in and around the participating zoos and aquaria to raise public awareness for the turtle and tortoise crisis and to collect funds to support conservation projects for turtles and tortoises in the wild. The preliminary results of the campaign were announced at the EAZA Annual Conference in Bath, UK during the official Shellshock closing ceremony. Together the participants have organised many awareness activities and collected a total of **€ 250.058,60**.

The raised funds will be used to support selected turtle and tortoise conservation projects in their countries of origin. Turtle and tortoise conservation is not expensive; a project that can literally save a species from extinction can be completed for € 5.000 to € 10.000. The first Shellshock funds were transferred to a turtle conservation project in a small community in Sri Lanka, which was devastated by the 2004 tsunami. Shellshock emergency funds were made available soon after the tsunami to rebuild the village and reactivate the turtle conservation activities of the residents.

The most remarkable efforts towards the three Shellshock mission targets by participating zoos and aquaria were awarded with special prizes. Fuengirola Zoo (Spain) received an Exhibit Award, for the construction of a highly naturalistic turtle enclosure for the keeping and breeding of the endangered Malaysian giant turtle (*Orlitia borneensis*). The Fundraising Award went to Newquay Zoo (United Kingdom), for the "100 mile walk" in which keepers of the zoo made a 100 mile sponsored walk through the South-West of England. Chester Zoo (United Kingdom) was the winner of the Education Award with their cartoon style education programme telling the true-life story of the presumed extinct, but recently rediscovered Yunnan box turtle (*Cuora yunnanensis*). The final award, for captive-breeding, was handed out to Munster Zoo (Germany) for the first successful breeding of the flowerback box turtle (*Cuora galbinifrons*) in Europe.

Shellshock has been the largest conservation effort for turtles and tortoises ever. The fundraising results provide great opportunities to support conservation projects and the many activities have placed turtles and tortoises and their conservation crisis in the minds of many of the 125 million zoo guests that annually visit EAZA zoos and aquaria (and beyond). Shellshock will continue to have an impact in the coming years, by extended turtle and tortoises activities in the zoos and aquaria of Europe, a Shellshock based conservation campaign in China and continued captive-breeding of several rare and critically endangered species.

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The Shellshock Missions

The three missions of the EAZA Shellshock Campaign were:

Mission Target 1: Raise awareness of the conservation and welfare crisis that the world's turtles and tortoises currently face.

Mission Target 2 of Shellshock is to encourage zoos and aquaria to work with more specimens and species of turtle and tortoise – to bring them into the safety of the Turtle Ark. These Turtle Arks preserve these species and thereby retaining the option for future conservation action (i.e. their reintroduction) when circumstances have changed sufficiently in the wild to permit this.

Mission Target 3 of Shellshock is to raise funds that will directly support the conservation of turtle and tortoise species in their countries of origin.

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Additional information is also available on the website of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (www.eaza.net). For information on EAZA or Shellshock you may also contact Corinne Bos, EAZA Conservation Campaign Coordinator. Phone: +31 20 5200753 / Email: corinne.bos@nvdzoos.nl