

Why are they going extinct?

- Because trade is out of control. It is estimated that **twelve million turtles are sold in China each year**.
- Because imports have increased dramatically in recent years, for example **imports to China have increased 10-fold in 30 years**. Countries selling turtles and tortoises to China include, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, New Guinea, and even the USA (over 7 million turtles are exported each year from the USA to China).
- Because turtles and tortoises have slow life histories. Most turtles sold are wild caught, and their **low reproductive and growth rates** make it impossible for them to breed fast enough in the wild to meet demand.
- Because throughout the world turtle and tortoise **habitats are being destroyed**. In areas of high human inhabitation, turtles and tortoises are at risk from introduced animals and pollution. They are killed for subsistence meat, for their shells and for the consumptive and medicinal markets. Many species also face pressures from the international pet trade. They are collected from the wild in unsustainable numbers.

Why are turtles & tortoises traded?

- For their meat and shells.
- For use in Traditional Chinese Medicine.
- To be sold as pets.

Sackful of live turtles at a Chinese food market, © Bill McCord



'Oscar' the ShellShock mascot, courtesy Aardman Animations

How can you help?

- Buy ShellShock merchandise.
- Fund-raise for ShellShock through your zoo or aquarium.
- Tell people about ShellShock.
- Find out more about turtle and tortoise conservation and the ShellShock campaign www.eaza.net and www.turtlesurvival.org

If you would like to support turtle and tortoise conservation directly, you can contribute to the ShellShock fundraising campaign ...

Cheques can be made payable to:

ShellShock,
c/o Chester Zoo, Chester, CH2 1LH, UK

Campaign organisers

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Turtles and Tortoises have lived on earth for over 250 million years! They've seen the rise and fall of the dinosaurs. They can live to be 200 years old. They enjoy the quiet life.

But in the last 30 years ... they're watching as humans catapult them to extinction.



Critically Endangered Mangrove Terrapin, © H. Quinn

The European Association of Zoos & Aquaria (Eaza) has launched the ShellShock campaign in an effort to fight the threat of extinction facing so many turtle and tortoise species. ShellShock will do this by:

- Supporting conservation projects in the wild.
- Helping to raise awareness of the crisis internationally.
- Establishing populations of priority species of turtle and tortoise in zoos and aquariums in specially managed 'Turtle Arks' to guard against their extinction.

There are 272 species of turtle and tortoise currently known to science (IUCN Red List 2003) and more than half of these are either Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable to extinction.

We must act now if we are to save them!



Critically Endangered Leatherback Turtle,
© Doug Perrine www.seapics.com

What is ShellShock doing?

Raising Awareness. Most zoos and aquariums hold tortoise and turtle species and many have been involved with previous rescue missions and customs seizures. They will use their position to tell the ShellShock story to a large audience and enlist support.

Building an Ark. Some species are in such desperate danger that short-term assurance colonies are the only way to ensure their survival. ShellShock has identified 35 priority species and will encourage participation of zoos and aquariums in captive breeding for these species.

Saving Species in the Wild. ShellShock will support new and existing turtle and tortoise conservation projects in the wild. Even small projects can make a huge difference – a project with a budget of just 5,000 Euros saved a whole species from extinction!

Projects that ShellShock will be supporting:

Training of customs officers at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia – a major trade hub for turtles. Training customs officers to identify turtle species will empower them to be more proactive at controlling the trade. Currently, many shipments are falsely labelled or they are accompanied by incorrect permits. Improvements at this airport would impact trade moving from Indonesia and Thailand and the project could be replicated at other major airports in the region, such as Jakarta and Singapore.

Combating snake-neck turtle exploitation on Roti Island, Indonesia. The Roti Island snake-necked turtle (*Chelodina mccordi*) is endemic to Roti, the southern-most island of Indonesia. Recent population surveys revealed the species is close to extinction throughout its limited range, yet dealers from Jakarta continue to demand more specimens for the pet and meat trade. ShellShock will aim to support the work of TRAFFIC South-east Asia in a consolidated effort to save this species. Work will include, conducting habitat surveys, encouraging the Indonesian government to fully protect the species and creating an ex-situ population as a safeguard against extinction.

Critically Endangered Red-Roofed Turtle, © Rick Hudson



Pile of live South-Asian Box Turtles for the food market,
© C.R. Shepherd, TRAFFIC South-east Asia

Saving the Burmese roof turtle from extinction.

This rare species only found in Myanmar, had not been seen since 1935, and recommendations had been received to list the species as Extinct. However, two females and one male were discovered in 2002 living in a temple pond in Mandalay. These three precious specimens were transferred to the Yadanabon Zoo in Mandalay. Since then, two further individuals have been found and added to this group – from confiscations from traders and from live food markets. The turtle group is currently housed in temporary facilities. ShellShock will aim to help provide improved facilities for this vital 'ark' population at Yadanabon Zoo.

Community-based education to conserve the Swinhoe's soft-shell turtle. Only five individuals of this turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) are known to exist – four in Chinese zoos and temples, and one in a lake in Hanoi. Native to rivers in southern China and northern Vietnam, scientists have been unable to locate any remaining individuals of the species in the wild. However, interviews with local people living around a large wetland complex in the Thanh Hoa province, south of Hanoi, suggest that the species still exists there. The project will work with local communities to raise awareness of the species and to discourage the hunting of soft-shells in these wetlands.