

Shellshock EAZA Turtle and Tortoise Campaign 2004-2005



EAZA Conservation Campaigns

Over the last ten years Europe's leading zoos and aquariums have worked together in addressing a variety of issues affecting a range of species and habitats. EAZA's annual conservation campaigns have raised funds and promoted awareness amongst millions of zoo visitors each year, as well as providing the impetus for key regulatory change.

INTRODUCTION

Aiming to raise awareness of the plight of turtles and tortoises, EAZA brought its fourth annual conservation campaign to life in 2004: 'Shellshock'. It is estimated that over 12 million turtles are sold in China each year, either for consumption or for the traditional Chinese medicine trade. Many of these animals will have been wild caught, and given the low reproductive and growth rate of many species their extinction in the wild is thus inevitable unless action is taken.



CAMPAIGN AIMS

The Shellshock campaign defined three key aims as follows:

- To raise awareness of the diabolical conservation and welfare crisis that the world's turtles and tortoises face;
- To encourage zoos and aquariums to work with more specimens and more species of turtle and tortoise, and to bring them into the safety of a 'turtle ark' - a captive insurance population; and
- To raise funds to directly support the conservation of turtle and tortoise species in their countries of origin.

CAMPAIGN ACHIEVEMENTS

Shellshock was the largest ever conservation effort for turtles and tortoises. The fundraising results provided great opportunities to support conservation projects. The many awareness activities placed turtles and tortoises and their conservation crisis in the minds of zoo visitors and beyond.

An impressive 134 EAZA member institutions participated in the campaign and raised more than €250,000 for turtle conservation within the active period (2004/05) of the campaign. Since the campaign's formal closure a further €120,000 have been raised.

To create a 'Turtle Ark' all Shellshock participants were asked to complete the 'Shellshock Reservist Form' to indicate their willingness to create space for endangered turtle and tortoise species. The spaces would be used in cases where species become extinct in the wild or where the establishment of captive breeding programmes was deemed necessary.



PROJECTS SUPPORTED

The first €9,000 collected went straight to a small Sri Lankan community that had been severely affected by the tsunami in Asia in December 2004. The whole community was totally dependent on turtle conservation activities for their livelihood through the Turtle Conservation Project (TCP).

A total of twelve conservation projects with a focus on Asian countries were subsequently supported with grants from Shellshock. They are listed on the table overleaf, with related EAZA institutions indicated in brackets. The remaining funds were distributed by the Turtle Conservation Fund (see next section) and a document outlining the grants they have awarded can be found on the EAZA website.

This table shows projects that received funds directly from the Shellshock campaign:

Project	Country	Funds granted
Turtle Conservation Project - Tsunami release effort	Sri Lanka	€9,000
Leatherback Ocean Wanderer	Gabon	€19,875
Royal Chitwan National Park Turtle Conservation Project (ZSL)	Nepal	€10,173
Turtle breeding facilities in the Angkor Centre for the conservation of biodiversity (Münster)	Cambodia	€10,000
Madras Crocodile Bank Trust - Deori headstart facilities	India	€8,690
Conservation International - South-East Asian capacity building	S-E Asia	€15,000
KATALA foundation - Facilities for <i>S. leytensis</i>	Philippines	€10,000
WCS - <i>B. baska</i> project	Cambodia	€6,803
Marine Turtle Project Cabo Delgado (ZSL)	Mozambique	€11,820
Captive breeding project for ploughshare tortoise (Jersey)	Madagascar	€11,145
Endemic <i>Cuora</i> sp. research project (Münster)	China	€10,000
<i>Malacochersus tornieri</i> research project	Tanzania	€3,392

| WHERE ARE WE NOW? |

A Turtle Conservation Fund was established in 2002 by the IUCN-SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and Conservation International to help identify and to fund turtle conservation projects. EAZA joined this fund in 2007 with the Shellshock campaign.

As one of its main functions, TCF administers a turtle conservation and research grants programme. Awards are granted to organisations or individuals for specific conservation or research projects dealing with highly endangered tortoises or freshwater turtles with either partial or full support as funding allows.

Priority for funding is given to projects that focus on tortoises or freshwater turtles that are already highly threatened according to the IUCN Red List criteria, either Critically Endangered or Endangered. Unfortunately, these turtles and tortoises are at very high risk of extinction and have been heavily impacted by human activities, especially in the last few decades. All have been affected by habitat destruction, some by hunting as a food source, and others by live capture for the illegal international wildlife trade. The work to conserve these species must continue.



| LINKS |

- www.eaza.net – website of EAZA, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria.
- www.trurtleconservationfund.org – the website of the Turtle Conservation Fund
- www.tcpsrilanka.org – the website of the Turtle Conservation Project in Sri Lanka
- www.iucn-tftsg.org – the website of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group
- www.iucnredlist.org – the website of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™