

Studbook Breeding programme *Cordylus cataphractus*, Annual report 2001.

Contents:

1. Introduction and activities in 2001.
2. Studbook population.
3. Locations.
4. Births.
5. Imports.
6. Deaths.
7. Transfers.
8. Discussion.

1. Introduction and activities in 2001.

1.1 Introduction.

This annual report will summarise activities of the studbook breeding programme of the South African Armadillo lizard *Cordylus cataphractus*.

Due to the slow developments of proper software within the European Studbook Foundation (ESF) the ESF board examined the possibility of the use of Sparks, issued by ISIS.

Communication between ESF and ISIS took about a year, but finally (March 2002) there was agreement on this issue. The former programme used did not have a printer option, so a printed version of the studbook population was not possible for a long time. It is now and it is attached to this report.

1.2 Activities.

Over a period of several years the number of locations within the studbook was rather low. 4 Locations in Holland with twenty specimens. Reproduction was limited to 2 locations (Zwartepoorte and V. Lierop). Several of the breeding pairs were very old. 2 Specimens at location Zwartepoorte are at least 25 years old.

Within the studbook 11 wild founder animals are present. Given this low number and the fact that a few animals will soon be too old to reproduce ways were examined to increase the number of founder animals. Within the European zoo community there are hardly any specimens available and cooperation between zoos and privates is still not running smoothly. An official statement by the European Association for Zoos and Aquariums EAZA is expected this year.

Within the private sector a few dozens of Armadillo lizards is kept. The origin is often unknown and so is the legal status. Reasonable numbers recently showed up in the international pet trade, in particular in Eastern European countries.

Animals with illegal status cannot be accepted by the studbook.

Furthermore it proved to be difficult to trace the captive born animals in for example Germany. The offspring is mostly sold by breeders for reasonable high prices and the buyers are often unknown.

A announcement in the German herpetological magazines for participation in the studbook will be issued soon.

Because of the small genetic base of the studbook a request for a number of new blood lines from South Africa (from zoos or from the wild) is done in 2001 to Cape Nature Conservation. In the same period in 2001 a request for animals was done by a British private person.

This request was rewarded with the offer issuing an export permit for 12 specimens held at the University of Stellenbosch. It concerned partly a group of confiscated specimens and partly 3 specimens collected on the location Graafwater for research on behaviour by the University.

After issue of the export permit by Nature Conservation RSA an import permit for the Netherlands was applied to Cites/Laser, Netherlands.

The import took place on the 5th of October 2001. All animals arrived safely and were divided among 4 studbook locations, 2 in the Netherlands and 2 in the United Kingdom.

The 3 specimens from the known location will be managed as a separate group within the studbook and therefore not be mixed with other specimens within the studbook. The 3 are housed at location Zwartepoorte.

The sexes of the group of 12 is not exactly known, as sexing is not without any problems. See under "Discussion".

2. Studbook population.

At 31 December 2001 the population exists out of 31 (12.8.11) living specimens at 7 locations.

For details see the attached Studbook population report 2001.

3. Locations.

At 31 December 2001 the species is housed at 7 locations in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. There has been some communication with German keepers/breeders for participation within the studbook. No concrete actions by these people is taken, but actual participation in 2002 is to be expected.

4. Births.

In February 2001 2 animals from 1 female were born at location Van Lierop; the juveniles died shortly after birth.

At location van Lierop another female gave birth to a dead juvenile. The female died shortly after birth (see Deaths)

At location De Haas one birth can be reported.

5. Imports.

In 2001 12 specimens were imported from the Republic of South Africa. Export Cites permits were issued by Cape Nature Conservation and import Cites permits by the Dutch Cites authorities. For further details see 2.1

6. Deaths.

At location Zwartepoorte 1 specimen died. One 11 years old animal suddenly died, without any signs of health problems. No autopsy is carried out, due to the autolytic condition of the specimen.

At location Van Lierop 1 female died in February after giving birth to a dead offspring.

7. Transfers.

At the 5th of October 12 specimens were imported from the Republic of South Africa. These animals were obtained for strengthening the studbook population. 3 Specimens staid at location Zwartepoorte, 6 went to two new locations in the United Kingdom and 2 were supposed to go to a new location in the Netherlands, of which transfer is expected to be carried out in 2002.

8. Discussion.

Considering the age of a few original breeding pairs in the studbook the import of 12 new specimens into the studbook creates new possibilities for future reproduction. According to the information received from the University of Stellenbosch, the 12 animals were housed in two separate groups. From the group of 9 it is not known how kinship relation is; over the period the lizards were kept at the university several births took place. Unfortunately it is not known which animals are the parents and which are the offspring. The second group of 3 (1.2) from location Graafwater is considered as a separate group within the studbook; the animals were individually marked on the head.

Also of the offspring at locations Van Lierop and Zwartepoorte sex determination is rather difficult. Femoral pores of individual females are sometimes rather large, specifically in older individuals, and are also season-dependant.

In the year 2002 of all studbook specimens digital photo's will be made for comparison. Vanderhoeven in the United Kingdom claims to have found a method for sex determination with the help of photo's. Several morphological parameters can be used for identification.

Cordylus cataphractus is listed as vulnerable by the South African Red data book . From recent information one could conclude that the species is not so restricted as once supposed. Nevertheless the species is not widely distributed in captivity. Therefore intensification of captive reproduction is essential.

Husbandry- and breeding guidelines will be issued by the studbook in the year 2002.

The studbook kindly wishes to thank Cape Nature Conservation, RSA and Laser/Cites in the Netherlands for their cooperation issuing export- and import Cites permits for 12 specimens.

Henk Zwartepoorte,
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