

European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) conservation program in Switzerland

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Abstract: A study undertaken by Florence Nuoffer with the collaboration of the University of Neuchâtel in Moulin-de-Vert in 1999 confirm the recent presence of viable populations of this species in our country. This study was followed in collaboration with the University of Neuchâtel, but by adding to it a new method of study with captures. The results showed that the population of the Moulin-de-Vert comprised more than 300 animals, 50 years only after the first official releasing of around fifty animals of various origins. The determination of suitable sites of basking of the European pond turtle was also studied: the preferred sites are above the floating trunks and the dry clusters of reeds in edge and inside the reed vegetation (more than 60% of the observations). The study confirm also the presence of the species in the "Grande Cariçaie", and the extinction in Fräschels.

Those 4 years work, the European pond turtle currently changes from the status of disappeared species in Switzerland to species in critical danger of extinction (CR = critically endangered, according to the category list of the UICN). This criterion is also based on the smallness of its distribution in Switzerland. *Emys orbicularis orbicularis* becomes a priority species of the herpetological fauna in Switzerland from the point of view of the conservation and reinforcement of the populations.

Key words: conservation, *Emys orbicularis* status, Switzerland.

Resumen: Programa de conservación del galápagó europeo (*Emys orbicularis*) en Suiza. – Un estudio emprendido en 1999 por Florence Nuoffer en colaboración de la Universidad de Neuchâtel en Moulin-de-Vert, confirma la presencia de poblaciones viables de *Emys orbicularis* en Suiza. A partir de las capturas efectuadas se estima que la población de Moulin-de-Vert está formada por más de 300 individuos resultado de introducciones anteriores con ejemplares de varios orígenes. El estudio también confirma la presencia de la especie en "Grande Cariçaie" y su extinción en Fräschels. Respecto a la selección de lugares de asoleamiento adecuados, se pone de manifiesto una preferencia por troncos y masas de vegetación flotante (más del 60% de las observaciones). Estos datos, junto a lo limitado de su distribución, modifican el estatus de protección de *Emys orbicularis* en Suiza, que se incluye como especie en peligro crítico de extinción (CR, según la UICN) situándola como una especie prioritaria desde el punto de vista de la conservación y el refuerzo de las poblaciones.

Palabras clave: conservación, estatus de *Emys orbicularis*, Suiza.

INTRODUCTION

For many years, contacts were made with French and German *Emys orbicularis* conservation programs that proved fruitful enough

to encourage us to initiate as soon as possible the preservation of this species in Switzerland. The *Emys orbicularis* conservation program was initiated by PRT (Protection et Récupération des Tortues) in 1999. Its goal is

