

simple aquatic set ups with a water temperature of 82°F. The hatchlings have been raised on a diet of gut-loaded crickets and Ziegler Aquatic Turtle Food and now average 103 grams.

Captive Husbandry: Oral

An Outbreak of Intranuclear Coccidiosis in *Pyxis* spp. Tortoises

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Intranuclear coccidiosis (IC) of tortoises has been reported in *Astrochelys* (*Geochelone*) *radiata*, *Manouria impressa*, *Psammobates* (*Geochelone*) *pardalis*, *Indotestudo forstenii*, and *Chersina angulata*. This report describes an outbreak of IC in captive *Pyxis* spp. kept at Behler Chelonian Center (BCC).

The outbreak began in January 2008 and intermittent fatalities have continued into 2010. Mortality is currently 50/101. Species/subspecies (mortality rate in parentheses) include *Pyxis arachnoides arachnoides* (3/29), *P. a. brygooi* (11/17), *P. a. oblonga* (7/14), and *P. planicauda* (29/41). Selected tortoises were either necropsied by MG, or gross necropsy was performed by TB and formalin-fixed tissues were sent to MG for histopathology. Histologic evidence of IC and associated lesions (e.g., lymphoplasmacytic inflammation and necrosis) were present in multiple tissues in *P. a. brygooi* and *P. planicauda*. Swabs of cloaca and nasopharynx were collected on selected individuals to identify IC-specific nucleic acid sequences (JW); positive results occurred in all four (sub)species. Four individuals were retested after treatment and two (both juvenile) remained positive. Four *P. planicauda* were tested by PCR for *Mycoplasma* sp. (all positive), and by consensus PCR and sequencing for iridoviruses (all negative) and herpesviruses (all negative).

Clinical signs included severe lethargy, rapid weight loss, weakness, gasping respiration, and swollen erythematous vents with gross evidence of epidermal necrosis. Thick choanal mucus was present on gross necropsy. Death usually followed onset of clinical signs within a few days. Five cases were treated with ponazuril (90 mg/ml compounded) 30 mg/kg PO q24h x 4d, and three (60%) of these survived. Subsequently, toltrazuril (Baycox 5% oral suspension, Bayer Vital GmbH, Deutschland), 15 mg/kg, q48h x 5 doses for 2 to 4 treatments at least 2 weeks apart, was administered to 45 individuals including the 3 that survived ponazuril treatment; 30 (67%) of these survived. There was no statistically significant difference detected in outcomes between treatments. Individuals were also treated with enrofloxacin, metronidazole, and nutritional support as indicated.

The affected group of *Pyxis* was not isolated from other chelonians at BCC, but no other species has exhibited clinical signs to date. *Astrochelys radiata* was among the species that shared air space with affected *Pyxis*.

Chelonian Health and Disease: Oral

Softshell Turtles in Temple Ponds of India and Bangladesh

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In south Asia turtles have been kept in temple ponds of different world religions since thousands of years. Whereas in Bangladesh only a few Islamic temple ponds with turtles exist, numerous temple tanks with turtles are scattered all over India. In Hindu belief the turtle is associated with the Kurma (first Avatar) incarnation of Lord Vishnu, but most of these temples are dedicated to one of the creators, to Lord Shiva. The future of several riverine turtle species in India and Bangladesh is threatened by the National River Linking Project (NRLP) which is expected to cause major changes and devastation of river ecosystems. In the opinion of developers every single drop of river water reaching the ocean is supposed to be a waste. In collaboration with the Forest department countless temple complexes with ponds could be used for a systematic breeding and subsequently rearing and repatriation of a variety of freshwater turtles. Temples are centers of encounter, humility and worshipping and thus ideal for transporting information and awareness to people. Unfortunately articles in newspapers with reports of a mass dying of turtles in temple ponds are not uncommon and have a variety of different reasons. Therefore awareness of the temple committees and a modification of temple ponds have to be raised and implemented. We identified a temple pond in West Bengal inhabiting a population of Black Softshell Turtles (*Nilssonina nigricans*) which is going to be altered to a breeding facility and could be presented as a model throughout the country.

Softshell Turtles: Oral