



Graz, 25th March, 2021

PRESS RELEASE – Turtle Island | Peter Praschag

Peter Praschag succeeds in a zoological world sensation at Turtle Island in Graz

The red-backed softshell turtle (*Cycloderma aubryi*) is native to Central Africa, more specifically to the Congo. Two of these turtles have been living for several years at Turtle Island, in Graz, Austria. One month ago, Peter Praschag, the founder and owner of Turtle Island, and his team achieved a zoological sensation: the hatching of the first ever captive-bred offspring of this species. The parents of the six babies spent a little more than two years together before Turtle Island's breeding efforts were finally successful. And it seems that they are still in love: "During the last X-ray of mom, we discovered 21 new eggs. We expect that they could be laid at any time." Shannon DiRuzzo, veterinarian at Turtle Island, explains: "These offspring are also sensational from another perspective. The female previously struggled with a bacterial infection for months, but survived. We had to remove parts of the shell with a bone saw and I treated the wounds regularly with a laser donated to us by an American company. But she survived and only a few wounds on her shell are evidence of her tough past. We are pleased that she feels so comfortable with us and is now gravid for the second time".

The little orange newcomers will stay in Graz for a few more years. In the long run, Turtle Island's goal is to reintroduce these captive-bred individuals back to their countries of origin. However, this can only be achieved with awareness campaigns in those countries, and long-term financial support for the conservation breeding center in Graz. Peter Praschag continues: "All over the world we find species that are threatened in nature and scarcely exist anymore. Here in Graz, we enable the breeding of these rare species through the inexhaustible commitment of the entire scientific team and animal keepers, as well as the help of volunteers. Without Turtle Island, many wonderful turtle species would have become extinct. We need the help of the public to be able to continue our projects."

Turtle Island | Erhaltungszucht und Forschungsstation für Schildkröten | Tierheim

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TURTLE ISLAND – at a glance

World's largest and most species-rich turtle conservation breeding station

Category A Zoo

Scientific institute & research facility

Animal shelter & sanctuary

Turtle Island in Figures

- Founded in **2013** by Dr. Peter Praschag (internationally recognized scientist and zoologist)
- Comprised of **4** scientifically recognized centers, located in Austria
- Approximately **2500** turtle specimens in total
- Home of **270** of the **360+** turtle taxa on the planet
- We house **37** of the **50** most endangered turtle species
- Home of approx. **90%** of the turtles within the two most endangered genera worldwide (*Batagur* & *Cuora*)
- Successful conservation breeding of more than **170** species
- **Six** of these species were the world's first captive-bred successes
- Successful breeding of **three** species that are already extinct in the wild

WE ARE

- a recognized scientific institution, research facility, and zoo, focusing on the conservation and breeding of the world's most endangered and overlooked turtle species
- a CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) certified institution (registration number AT033)
- a research station for the taxonomy and biology of turtles, with a focus on reproductive biology and ecology
- Austria's only official shelter and sanctuary for confiscated or unwanted turtles
- an European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) studbook keeper for 11 turtle species
- facilitators of in-situ reintroduction projects (e.g., Vienna Zoo and other internationally renowned zoos and research stations)
- public awareness advocates and educators for species conservation