



EDITION SPECIALE

CONTRE LA FERMETURE DU CENTRE CARAPAX



AGAINST THE CLOSING OF CARAPAX CENTER





EDITORIAL

Chers collègues et amis,

J'ai écrit un premier appel, "the new owner of CARAPAX Center", le 24 avril dernier, qui disait :

"Vendredi 17 avril dernier, le centre a donc été mis sous séquestre.... Mon avis est qu'il s'agit d'une suite assez logique du décret de septembre 2006, décret bien français, certes, mais une brèche dans la législation européenne et un encouragement sans précédent pour tous les trafiquants et mafias engagés dans le commerce animalier sous toutes ses formes.

Le centre CARAPAX a toujours fait "tâche" comme rebelle de la protection... On lui fait payer aujourd'hui ses prises de position et son combat... Je pense que certains aimeraient même remettre la main sur ces 17 000 tortues (en réalité 13 000...) et les redistribuer dans le circuit commercial..."

Cette opération menée par la "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere", la région Toscane, propriétaire du terrain, vise à expulser les actuels gérants du Centre, Donato Ballasina et son équipe, qui depuis 20 ans ont payé l'ensemble des installations qui s'y trouvent, avec leur travail, l'argent des donations ou des fonds européens. Ils ont récupéré et nourris cet imposant cheptel animalier, conséquence et même "poubelle" du trafic, commerce, élevage animalier en tout genre, de toutes origines italienne et internationale...

Et pourquoi veut-elle récupérer ce Centre ? Peut-être, parce qu'il y a la crise, le tourisme italien ne marche pas très bien, les prix sont nettement plus élevés qu'en France... Et comme le Centre, après expertise financière de la région, lui, fonctionne bien, il s'agit de "mettre la main" sur le matériel, les locaux et animaux, s'improviser éleveurs de tortues et de cigognes avec le soutien "d'experts" comme Marco Zuffi, professeur à l'université de Pise, qui l'écrit lui-même, dans la réponse qu'il fait à mon courrier du 24 avril : " It is very close the sign of a formal partnership between "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere" the legal responsible and owner of the whole building complex, and the University of Pisa and our Museum of Natural History. " Quand sa carrière dépend d'un généreux mécène, cela justifie-t-il de se mettre à genoux devant lui ?

Et que penser de ces mécènes qui dirigent la région Toscane, ainsi que la ville de Massa Marittima, membres du Parti Communiste italien ? Ils n'ont jamais eu une bonne réputation sur la protection de l'environnement et de plus, il ne fait aucun doute pour moi, que ces dirigeants sont toujours liés à la bureaucratie russe, reconvertie en de multiples mafias, dont le trafic animalier, activité toujours fort lucrative (voir article de "Libération")...

Je ne parle même pas des mafias locales... Marco Zuffi, dans ce domaine applique "l'omerta", la loi du silence, les mots "trafic" et "mafia" ne sont pas dans son vocabulaire. Or les trafiquants sont bien là, agressent les membres de CARAPAX, cherchent à légaliser leur activité et éviter la répression... La seule chose sérieuse que reproche Marco à Donato est de ne pas avoir de "déclaration CITES" ? Mais cette déclaration n'a qu'un but commercial, pouvoir acheter et vendre les animaux qui sont ainsi "déclarés" aptes...

Je ne ferai pas de procès d'intention à Marco, il déclare, la main sur le cœur, que ce n'est pas une opération commerciale, certes, mais est-il si sûr de ses employeurs ? Et, reprocher à Donato de ne pas avoir de certificat CITES, c'est presque lui reprocher de ne pas avoir fait de commerce...

Donc, que de la bonne lecture, déclarations des uns et des autres, nous vous conseillons celle de l'éditorial de la revue d'avril 2009 de "La Tortue" que vous trouverez sur le site de la SOPTOM, et comment Jacques Wintergust va-t-il trancher entre le flamant nain et son ami Patrick Lalanne, rien n'est rose...



Marco Zuffi escaladant les clôtures du Centre, afin de capturer des animaux, les emporter à Pise pour en faire quoi ?



Sac, y a-t-il des tortues dedans ? Elles vont quitter le Centre...

Alain Veysset, éditeur



EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues and friends,

I wrote in the first appeal, the 24th of April, "The new owner of CARAPAX Center":

"Friday 16th, the Center has been sequestered... From my point of view, it's quite logical after the French decree of September 2006 (which liberalises wild animals trade, coming from breeding), a typical French decree of course, but also a breach in European legislation and an encouragement without precedent for all dealers and mafias engaged in all sort of animal trade.

The CARAPAX Center has always been a sort of rebel of the protection... His stands and his fight charge an awful lot for the Center... I think some people would like to take over these 17000 turtles (13000 in reality) and redistribute them in the commercial process"....

This operation, organised by the "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere" (Toscany region), owner of the land, aims for the expulsion of the actual direction of the Center, Dobato Ballasina and his staff, who have paid all the present installations for 20 years, with their work, money from donations and European funds. They have collected this impressive animal livestock, consequence and even "bin" of wild animal trade, all kind of breeding, from all Italian or international origin...

And why do they want to recover the Center ? Maybe because of the crisis... The prices are very high in Italy, (higher than in France...) it's not good for tourism... And after financial expertise of the Toscany region, the Center has no problem, they want to take over on the equipment, place and animals, to act as turtles storks breeders with the support of "experts" like Marco Zuffi, teacher at the Pisa's university, who wrote (in his answer to my appeal of the 24th of April) : " It is very close the sign of a formal partnership between "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere" the legal responsible and owner of the whole building complex, and the University of Pisa and our Museum of Natural History. " When his career comes under the control of a generous sponsor, is it an obligation to kneel down in front of him?

And what about these sponsors at the head of Toscany region and also Massa Marittima city? They are members of Italian Communist Party... They never had a very good reputation concerning environmental protection; and, from my point of view, they are always very close to Russian old bureaucracy, redeployed in multipurpose mafias, like animal traffics: a very lucrative activity...

And I don't say anything about local mafias... On this question, Marco Zuffi uses the "omerta" law, words like "traffic" or "mafias" are not in his vocabulary... And yet these dealers are really present, attacks CARAPAX members, try to legalize their activity and try to avoid repression... The only reproach Marco has against Donato is: "irregularities in CITES declarations on several animals hosted at the centre". But a CITES declaration has only commercial goal, buy and sell animals, fit for that...

I will not judge Marco on mere intent; he declares, and he swears, that it is not a commercial operation: all right, but is he so positive about his employers? And to reproach Donato for irregularities in CITES declarations, it's not far to reproach him not a single commercial activity...

So, enjoy reading reports from different points of view, we advise the very good editorial of Bernard Devaux in "La Tortue" magazine (on the web site of the SOPTOM organization) and how Jacques Winterguest will try to choose between miniature flamingo and his friend Patrick Lalanne, nothing is pink...

Alain Veysset, editor



Chalet à l'entrée du centre, à démonter...



Des kilomètres de grillage à enlever...



LETTER OF Mr ZUFFI

Dear all,

It is time I try to explain everybody several, likely unknown, matters on CARAPAX.

It is very close the sign of a formal partnership between "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere" the legal responsible and owner of the whole building complex, and the University of Pisa and our Museum of Natural History.

I, probably, shall be the *pro-tempore* scientific director.

We will manage all animals, buildings, cages, exotic and local nesting areas (nurseries) in order to preserve the actual wildlife, namely tortoises and turtles. There is no willing in selling any one animal (it is forbidden by Italian laws!). All of them are property of the Italian country, formally managed by Regione Toscana, whose laws regulate the activity and being of the "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere".

Our activity will be carried out for about 1,5 to 2 years, then the not scientific activities shall be carried out by a local company, under the scientific and technical supervision of a team of international experts and institutions. My future role within the new CARAPAX, if any, shall be discussed.

Position of Donato Ballasina has been discussed for administrative and financial matters, and for irregularities in CITES declarations on several animals hosted at the centre. So, nothing is referred to Donato as man, nor a personal attack to him has been performed by the Italian public administration.

I have been selected directly by Regione Toscana and "Comunità Montana Colline Metallifere" as an alternative expert, living and working in Tuscany.

In accordance with several governative and not governative institutions in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Great Britain we are just planning individual partnerships to guarantee a correct health status for all living tortoises, terrestrial and freshwater, complete genetic assessment of each individual, before to plan any population reinforcement, reintroduction or whatever possible action.

I wish, finally, underline all of you, that no aim is provided to change initial scope Donato brilliantly though, managed and organised at the Centre. The Centre will serve ONLY for turtle protection of all autochthonous Mediterranean terrestrial and freshwater species, with the exception of the problematic management of all the american sliders, illegally dispersed in several wet areas of Tuscany. Do not forget the wide series of possible damages that *Trachemys/Pseudemys* species can do with respect to the autochthonous (and primarily protected) *Emys* species of our Mediterranean region.

Best wishes everybody,

Marco"

Marco A.L. Zuffi

PhD Evolutionary Biology

SEH General Secretary (<http://www.seh-herpetology.org>)

Editor in Chief Acta Herpetologica (<http://ejour-fup.unifi.it/index.php/ah>)



Ruine entièrement réhabilitée par les volontaires de Carapax.
Objet de la contestation d'origine.



Installations pour les enfants,
à démonter...



20 YEARS OF CARAPAX

Answer to the letter of Mr. Marco Zuffi

Dear friends and colleagues,



As some of you know the European Centre for Chelonian conservation, better known under the name "CARAPAX", was founded by the Belgian herpetological Society RANA on behalf of the EU Commission as a Mediterranean Special protection Action (MEDSPA). It was elected as best fauna project by the EU.

Since its birth in 1989 Carapax fulfilled a huge job, not only with the successful breeding programme and reintroduction actions as it was foreseen in the agreement with the EU, but we could, with the help of some professional and high qualified laboratories and universities in Germany, Holland and Belgium complete an innovating research programme on genetic analysis of tortoises, bringing a better view on the evolution and dynamism of tortoise populations in the Med. area.

Our research programmes with several Italian and foreign universities on veterinarian, botanic, ethological, biogenetic and biological issues revealed several interesting results, helped in a better knowledge contributing to the conservation of tortoises and turtles.

In these 20 years we had the satisfaction of working participating in several reintroduction programmes, on the demand of Italian and Foreign Public Institutions, keeping since the beginning the European spirit.

Unfortunately, some people would like to take over the job without asking.....using politics, disinformation, and false accusation for getting approval. Stealing the work that others worked for with passion, knowledge, view and ambition for more than 20 years.

It is therefore absurd, unacceptable and juridical nonsense what Mr. Zuffi is writing. Maybe it is his wishful thinking since many years; 2 Years ago, June 2007 he even accepted to fulfill a role as "expert" during an enquiry on the scientific collection of chelonians (skeletons, shells, skulls and alcohol preparates), leaving our library-and meeting room closed under sequester since 2 years in one of the 2 buildings of Carapax because he didn't show up again after holidays to come to fulfill his job of identification of the species.

We remain perplex of some of the statements of Mr. Zuffi, which seem quite absurd: "we will manage all animals, buildings etc. "

Mr. Zuffi should be aware of laws and regulations, realising that the property of the structures is of RANA and other societies, participating at the CARAPAX project (SOPTOM, British Chelonia Group, Emys Conservation, Stichting Schildpad, Universities and Leasing companies). The statement concerning the property of the 13.336 turtles, the Storkpopulation and the Donkey family, is shocking: only some 300 animals belong to the international RANA Foundation, others are under sequester, or belong to foreign societies, zoos and public authorities of countries like Spain, Tunisia, Greece or France etc...Some 6400 other Chelonians belong still to their 3220 owners, all supporting members of CARAPAX.

Private property is still a principle recognised by law. If Mr. Zuffi is not able to respect this principle, than one can only consider the statements of Mr Zuffi as **an attempt of stealing property belonging to others!**

In that case we must conclude that Mr Zuffi is actively involved in the disgusting attempt to STEAL 20 years of hard work of the RANA team, of some 1800 volunteers and dozens of students and scientists.

Moreover it would mean an attempt to steal some 2.000.000 Euros of investment done by RANA in all these years!

(sic): "The position of Donato Ballasina has been discussed for so called irregularities also concerning CITES matters". We insist to answer clearly that Donato Ballasina isn't the owner of the animals, nor the importer, neither the legal representative of RANA in Italy, what some authorities try to make believe. We inform that the International RANA Foundation is the scientific organisation who denounces on regular basis, to the CITES authorities, all arrivals, exchanges with other centres/zoos/public authorities, hatchlings and released or deceased animals. The International RANA Foundation is a scientific organisation, the CARAPAX project an international Centre for the Protection of Turtles with rescue-facilities. The Italian, Belgian, British and EU CITES management authorities stated formally that for the use of Carapax both in receiving or keeping or reintroducing to nature chelonians NO CITES CERTIFICATES ARE REQUIRED. Perhaps Mr. Marco Zuffi says that CARAPAX has "some irregularities" concerning the CITES documents of its animals, because if other people that actually try to get in the management of the Centre, pulling out the legal owner of the project and the animals which is RANA it would give to Mr. Zuffi and his campagnons, giving them the CITES certificates (Convention on international TRADE of endangered species), the possibility to SELL the animals.

[.../...]



20 YEARS OF CARAPAX

[.../...]

For the Storks it is Dr. Cesare Martignoni who is the scientific coordinator of the project.

The 1st generation of the breeding pairs legally still belong to the organisations who participated in the project with their legally captive bred storks: the Zwin reserve in Belgium, the International Stork Foundation in Switzerland and the Hunawehr Stork Centre of France.

Also the donkeys used for grazing purposes have a private owner, but this is also another detail ignored by Mr. Zuffi and compagnons.

The arrogant and erroneous way of presenting reality is even offending: sic " The Centre will serve only for turtle protection of autochthonous Mediterranean terrestrial and fresh water species.."

What does Mr.Marco Zuffi think that RANA , CARAPAX has done for 20 years????

As you certainly all know:

-RANA, CARAPAX elaborated the first genetic studies on *Testudo* (published in several renomated scientific bulletins like "Phylogenetics and Molecular Evolution" 2001),

-RANA, CARAPAX, screened DNA of ALL *Emys orbicularis*, and worked out fine high standerd reintroduction projects in Northern Italy (Paro delle Groane, Parco Adda Sud, parco Bosco Nordio etc).

We remember a "reintroduction"from Mr Marco Zuffi, in releasing some adult *Emys orbicularis* in the Ticino (1989) coming from Bosco Mesola having a fiasco as result.

Concerning the ambiguous comment on the American sliders (Mr Zuffi doesn't seem to be aware that the problem is MUCH bigger than only these sliders) it seems at first lecture that CARAPAX would have released these animals in the wild in Tuscany while it is exactly the opposite. CARAPAX since the beginning of its existance has been confronted to this problemacy. mr Donato Ballasina, former scientific Director, now international project coordinator of RANA, has written a book in coproduction with the EU and the Calderini group on Turtle conservation (1995) In chapter 9 pages 215 etc he decrides the problem concluding with an appeal to the Italian Minister of Environment to stop this massive import. We even had meetings and talks with the italian companies, that import these sliders and reached agreements with some of them (Aquario di Bologna, SERA).

We participated also at a Pan European Action in 1997 convincing the EU Commission to insert the species in CITES; in december of the same year the species was banned officially.

Never Mr Zuffi partecipated at such actions, campaigns nor was he present with presentations on the scientific data concerning the dangers of alien species (e.g Forli, 2002).

CARAPAX offers also a rescue facility for unwanted turtles braught by private persons and Public Authorities, Forestry Dept., Towns, Customs, Police, Natural Parcs also local like Parco della Maremma (GR) and S. Rossore (Pisa), to avoid relaease in the wild, so exactly the opposite of what Mr. Zuffi is suggesting.

Therefore we consider these statemants of Mr Zuffi as pure diffamation and unloyal behaviour as a scientist and will sue him in Court.

Finally we would like to inform all colleagues, universities, governmental and non-governmental organisations, that the belgian association RANA who signed the agreement in 1989 with the European Union for the realisation of the MEDSPA project CARAPAX, for the conservation of turtles, is the only legal owner of the project, the structures, the working techniques and also of the logo, name and activities of CARAPAX wich are all protected by law and officially registrated at the Hague's Bureau of trade marks, and that no abuse will be accepted.

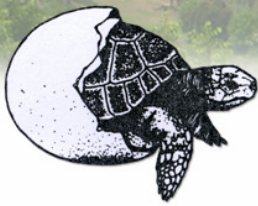


Trachemys au soleil

Prof. Holger Schroeder President RANA
Ir. Bram Rammeloo, Chairman of the International RANA foundation IVZW



LETTRE DE BERNARD DEVAUX



S.O.P.T.O.M

Nous avons appris il y a quelques semaines que le Centro CARAPAX de Massa Marittima, créé et dirigé par Donato Ballasina, était mis "sous séquestre" pour d'obscures raisons réglementaires. De ce fait, privé de toutes ressources, il est menacé de ne pouvoir gérer correctement le cheptel, et cette fermeture met en péril l'ensemble des animaux, et plus gravement l'avenir des programmes de conservation.

Nous étions tenus au courant depuis quelques mois des pressions qui s'exerçaient sur Donato Ballasina et son centre, pressions exercées par la Communauté Montata des Collines Métalifères, qui cherche depuis des années à s'approprier cette structure, et qui supporte mal les activités de cette association, du Centre CARAPAX. Nous connaissons Donato depuis 20 ans, et nous avons mené avec lui de nombreux programmes de protection des tortues. Nous avons également organisé des Congrès, des symposiums, et nous avons même fondé, avec d'autres centres espagnol et hollandais, la TORMED, structure européenne de sauvegarde des tortues ! Nous connaissons ses capacités en gestion animale, ses talents scientifiques (il est docteur en biologie), et son courage pour essayer de sauvegarder les tortues de son pays, et pour essayer de faire évoluer la mentalité de ses contemporains. Car finalement, derrière ces tracasseries, se profile le grand combat européen entre ceux qui veulent commercer (et vendre des tortues pour les terrariophiles) et ceux qui cherchent avant tout à préserver les espèces sauvages, dans leurs milieux. Il y a toujours dans nos pays des collectionneurs, et autres vendeurs de tortues, qui prétendent que les tortues sont des "animaux de compagnie" (des N.A.C.), et qui souhaitent que ces animaux deviennent des "biens de consommation". Au lieu de cela, Donato Ballasina, le groupe RANA, et le Centro CARAPAX, tout comme notre VILLAGE DES TORTUES en France, préconisent au contraire une législation plus rigoureuse, une limitation des ventes, et le développement de programmes scientifiques courageux. Nos centres sont à la pointe de la conservation, de la science, et de la sensibilisation du public. On voit bien pourquoi le centre CARAPAX s'est fait des ennemis. Il empêche manifestement un certain "milieu d'amateurs de tortues" de continuer à considérer les tortues comme uniquement des animaux de laboratoire et de terrarium. D'autre part, le centre CARAPAX reçoit du public, organise des Symposiums, et s'impose comme une vitrine internationale de la protection des tortues, et cela créé naturellement des jalousies, des envies, des concurrences, qui cherchent pas tous les moyens à déconsidérer cette structure et ses animateurs.

Il est toujours possible de critiquer quelque personne que ce soit (personne n'est parfait) et le centre CARAPAX a peut-être eu le tort de "trop en faire", en accueillant des milliers de tortues abandonnées par le public ou saisies par les douanes ou la police ! Mais qui, en dehors de cette structure, aurait pu recevoir des milliers de "tortues de Floride", (9000 ici...) envahissantes et nuisibles, que le public aurait rejeté dans les lacs et les égoûts italiens, en provoquant une pollution écologique irréversible ?

Il reste que le centre CARAPAX est aujourd'hui le plus grand centre d'accueil et d'élevage de tortues en Europe, et que son travail de pédagogie est remarquable. Il est pour l'Italie un lieu de référence, un site de grande notoriété, une preuve que ce pays a des structures scientifiques de conservation de haut niveau. Quand à Donato Ballasina, c'est un homme de courage et d'honnêteté, qui se bat depuis 20 ans POUR les tortues, car il sait que notre époque détruit partout la biodiversité, et qu'il faut s'opposer à cette dégradation de la nature. Donato continuera à se battre pour la préservation des tortues, nous le savons, et nous continuerons à le soutenir. C'est un homme intègre, déterminé, et d'une grande probité intellectuelle. Il fait honneur à sa région de Toscane, et à toute l'Italie, et son centre CARAPAX est connu dans le monde entier.

Nous devons donc tous le soutenir, car il est inadmissible que sa réalisation de Massa Marittima soit soumise aux diktats de jaloux et d'envieux, ou de fonctionnaires qui souhaitent l'évincer. C'est une honte, et toute injustice doit être combattue.

Nous demandons donc aux Autorités, à tous les scientifiques Italiens (mais également internationaux), et à toutes les personnes qui ont gardé du bon sens et une rigueur intellectuelle certaine, de demander que le Centre CARAPAX reprenne de toute urgence ses activités, et que Donato Ballasina puisse continuer son inestimable travail de sauvegarde des tortues italiennes. Le centre CARAPAX doit vivre, demeurer la vitrine exceptionnelle de la conservation des tortues en Italie, pour le plus grand bien des enfants et des adultes, et pour l'intérêt éco-touristique que ce centre représente".

B. Devaux, directeur du Village des Tortues de Gonfaron, France.
soptom@wanadoo.fr



LETTER OF C.H. PRITCHARD

I am taking the liberty of writing to you in my capacity as the President of the Chelonian Research Institute, a not-for-profit corporation in Oviedo, Florida, USA, dedicated to the study and conservation of the tortoises and turtles of the world. I am also the former Co-Chairman of the Freshwater Turtle and Tortoise Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. My curriculum vitae is attached.

The issue in question is the status and future of the European Centre for Chelonian Conservation, usually known as CARAPAX, and located in Massa Maritima, Tuscany, Italy.

The administrative and political framework in which the facility operates at present is complex, but I am convinced that the founding of CARAPAX was properly and legally undertaken when it was launched by the EU Commission in 1989, with input and involvement of the Belgian herpetological society RANA and technical liaison with Ghent University. Many of the expert staff are from Germany, although the facility is located in Italy. The resident animals themselves (mostly tortoises and turtles) have complex ownership arrangements with involvement of institutional owners in Spain, Tunisia, Greece, France, etc. These owners, as well as over 3000 private individuals, have expressed their support for, and trust of, the CARAPAX facility to look after their animals professionally and properly. By any criterion, it is a functioning international operation, both in terms of legal establishment and in terms of its multinational fields of operation.

I have visited the CARAPAX facility myself, and I was extremely impressed. The Scientific Director, Donato Balasina, has made this project the principal theme of his life for twenty years, and all turtle conservationists are greatly indebted to him for his tireless efforts. It is also noteworthy that, from the beginning, the work of developing captive breeding colonies of all of the isolated, distinct populations of tortoises and turtles in south-central Europe has been carried out with ongoing liaison with outside scientists and specialists. This is a highly professional operation.

For these reasons, I urge you to use all your power and influence to call off the unacceptable seizure of the CARAPAX facility and the expulsion of the staffers who have kept this operation functioning for two decades. This change is not needed, and the results are likely to be very harmful.

I ask this for two reasons:

It is the right thing to do on grounds of respect for those who have labored long years at CARAPAX and have become very expert at what they do. In the business world, we are used to the concept of "hostile takeover" of one business by another; legal perhaps, but it remains a predatory concept. We in the scientific and conservation world also sometimes detect jealous eyes upon us when we found, create, build, and operate important conservation projects in a sustainable fashion. The goal of the invaders in such cases is not necessarily financial; instead, they utilize political power to short-cut through the early "growth years" of a facility, and go straight to the point where they claim success in the ownership of a mature, established, sustainable operation. The truth is that they have seized and built upon the efforts of others, congratulating themselves for an operation that they did not create, and claiming success that has not been earned.

There is a short poem in English on this subject:

The heights by great men won and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept
Were toiling upward through the night.

Abrupt change in husbandry techniques or in successful incubation protocols should be avoided. If captive turtles and tortoises are reproducing successfully, nothing should be changed.

Those who keep extensive collections of live turtles and tortoises learn to identify the idiosyncrasies of the animals in their charge. New keepers and custodians need to serve an apprenticeship by which they can learn from the experience of the veteran staff, and introduce subtle husbandry improvements gradually and only when necessary. Many curators can tell stories about how change was brought about too fast, and seemingly healthy animals may be mysteriously dead one morning without warning, even when the new captive conditions might appear, to the human eye, to be better, or more luxurious, than before.

It is also a fact that the factors that bring about successful captive reproduction of tortoises may be so subtle that they are hard to document. For example, in the USA, captive reproduction of Galapagos giant tortoises was achieved for several successive years at San Diego Zoo and also in the Honolulu Zoo; but the breeding faltered subsequently in both facilities, for reasons that were simply not clear. In the Galapagos Islands, the stud male known as "Diego" (one of only three known adult male Española tortoises) has fathered almost 2000 young during his years at the Charles Darwin Research Station; whereas in the next enclosure, the last Pinta tortoise (Lonesome George) has failed to reproduce at all despite the presence of two females of an adjacent island population for the last 23 years. Husbandry is an art as well as a science, and the skills are not learned overnight!

Peter C. H. Pritchard, M.A., Ph.D.
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Résumé en français de la lettre de Peter Pritchard

Peter Pritchard, après avoir expliqué l'importance de ce centre européen de conservation des chéloniens, le plus grand par sa taille et le nombre des animaux, crée par l'Union Européenne en 1989, la qualité et le professionnalisme de l'équipe de Donato Ballasina, donne deux raisons essentielles contre la fermeture du Centre CARAPAX :

La 1^{ère} est qu'il n'est pas acceptable d'expulser l'équipe de directions qui a tout installé, financé pour le bien-être des animaux et des visiteurs, 20 ans de travail, et que les raisons des prédateurs sont particulièrement malsaines, il s'agit de voler ce travail, les installations, les animaux et de profiter de ce nid, en se glorifiant comme des coucous du succès des autres...

La 2^{ème} est qu'un changement brutal ainsi opéré a toutes les chances de bloquer les reproductions, installer une grave perturbation pour ces animaux captifs, on ne remplace pas une équipe de vétérans par une autre improvisée sans risquer épidémies et mortalité, ce qui a été constaté ailleurs.

Alain Veysset, éditeur



Coupages de presse sur les saisies anti-traffic.



LETTRE DU CRT (ESPAGNE)



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alla c.a. Sig. Gelli

Vice Presidente della Regione Toscana
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Egregio Signor Gelli,

le scriviamo questa lettera perchè siamo venuti a conoscenza delle rilevanti problematiche che si sono create in riferimento alla contestazione della gestione del Centro Carapax (Massa Marittima provincia di Grosseto).

In merito vorremmo dire che il Centro per la Riproduzione di Tartarughe dell'Albera (Catalogna) da oltre 12 anni ha instaurato un relazione molto stretta con il centro Carapax, sia a livello scientifico che rispetto alla conservazione di molte specie di tartarughe sono li sono preservate. Siamo in grado di garantire che il lavoro di Carapax è ed è stato molto importante per quanto riguarda la conservazione di tutte le specie di tartaruga nel bacino del Mediterraneo.

Il lavoro che realizza il centro e la gestione che mantiene, oltre ad essere eticamente impeccabili, sono di vitale importanza. Gli studi scientifici che hanno sviluppato nel corso degli anni sono stati fondamentali per la comprensione di aspetti della biologia ed ecologia di molte specie di tartarughe in via di estinzione.

Inoltre, il centro Carapax con il Centro per la Riproduzione di Tartarughe dell'Albera, il Centro di Recupero di Anfibi e Rettili della Catalogna, Le Village des Tortues SOPTOM (Francia), il Figlio di vendita Basso (Mallorca), formano parte della fondazione TORMED, che in Europa sta lavorando per conservare le diverse specie di tartarughe nella regione del Mediterraneo.

Pertanto vogliamo esprimere il nostro pieno sostegno alla gestione del centro Carapax e al suo direttore, il Dott. Donato Ballasina e, contemporaneamente chiediamo che le istituzioni competenti riconoscano l'importante lavoro che conduce il centro, sia a livello di gestione e di ricerca che a livello divulgativo sui problemi di conservazione dei tartarughe.



VENERDI 17 APRILE SI VUOLE CHIUDERE IL CENTRO CARAPAX – PETIZIONE D’AIUTO



Un éleveur des Landes est poursuivi pour importation illégale d'oiseaux d'Afrique. A moins qu'une intervention providentielle du ministère de l'Ecologie ne le tire d'affaire. Patrick Lalanne est un passionné d'oiseaux. Il les aime plutôt exotiques, grands, petits, colorés. Dans sa propriété de Mimbaste (Landes), il détient 200 spécimens d'une soixantaine d'espèces qui s'ébrouent près de l'étang ou volettent dans des volières.

Ingénieur chez GDF, l'homme est un amateur éclairé, si bien que sa passion l'a conduit à présider Aviomis, une association internationale d'éleveurs d'oiseaux. Sauf que sa passion l'a aussi rendu hors-la-loi. Qu'importe, l'oiselier a le bras long, si long que le ministère de l'Ecologie est en passe de modifier un texte de loi pour le blanchir.

Patrick Lalanne aime peut-être trop les flamants roses. Pas n'importe lesquels, les *Phoenicopterus minor*, des flamants nains qui nichent en Tanzanie, où la colonie est estimée à plus de 6 millions d'individus. Personne n'a le droit d'en détenir en France, sauf s'ils sont issus d'un élevage. Or, le flamant nain est douillet : jusqu'à présent, aucun ne s'est reproduit en captivité. De plus, il figure sur la liste des oiseaux protégés sur le territoire français, fixée par l'arrêté du 17 avril 1981. «*Le texte interdit la détention des espèces concernées sur le territoire métropolitain et le territoire de l'Union européenne dès lors qu'elles ont été prélevées dans le milieu naturel après le 17 avril 1981, ou après l'entrée en vigueur de la directive Habitats de mai 1992 pour les états européens*» explique Raymond Léost, juriste qui travaille pour France Nature Environnement. Le volatile est en outre classé à l'annexe II de la Convention internationale sur les espèces menacées (Cites). Son commerce est donc encadré : la Tanzanie dispose d'un quota lui permettant de vendre 1 600 individus par an dans le monde. Pas une plume de plus.

Sable. Quand Patrick Lalanne reçoit la visite des services vétérinaires en mai 2007, il dispose de 27 flamants nains. Le collectionneur ne peut prouver qu'ils sont nés en captivité. Et pour cause. Il présente les factures mais rien n'y fait, les oiseaux sont saisis et placés au zoo d'Amnéville (Moselle), à plus de 1 000 km. Deux jours après leur arrivée, l'un d'eux meurt et l'autopsie révèle un estomac bourré de sable. Ça la fiche mal pour le président d'une association d'éleveurs. Accusé de détention non-autorisée d'espèce protégée, Lalanne risque une amende. Jugement le 30 avril. Contactée par *Libération*, l'association Aviomis n'hésite pas à qualifier la saisie des services vétérinaires de «*hold-up*». Au tribunal de Dax, Patrick Lalanne, qui a refusé de répondre à nos questions, a expliqué que la loi était mal faite. «*Les textes sont en totale refonte. C'est comme si on saisissait vos meubles alors que vous êtes en train de contester votre dette aux impôts*», prévient son avocat, M^e Asselineau.

En effet, troublante coïncidence, mardi prochain, le Comité national de protection de la nature (CNPN) se réunira au ministère de l'Ecologie. Au menu : la modification du fameux arrêté sur les oiseaux protégés. Le texte qui sera examiné doit autoriser l'importation d'oiseaux capturés hors de France. Donc, des flamants tanzaniens. Or, Patrick Lalanne a une botte secrète : son carnet d'adresses. Il connaît personnellement quelques fonctionnaires haut placés du ministère de l'Ecologie, dont Jacques Wintergust, sous-directeur adjoint de la chasse, de la faune et de la flore au ministère. Et qui sera mardi le rapporteur du CNPN.

Colonie. Cette proximité agace prodigieusement des ONG et plusieurs fonctionnaires, lesquels contestent la modification du texte. «*Le président d'Aviomis est hors-la-loi? Pas grave, il suffit de régulariser une situation illicite!*», résume Jérôme Penseu, spécialiste des volatiles à la Commission départementale des Landes de la nature, des paysages et des sites. *Lalanne fait partie de la coalition des éleveurs d'oiseaux exotiques qui tente régulièrement de modifier la loi en sa faveur.* Contacté, le ministère n'a pas répondu.

Pour les écologistes, le flamant nain est le piaf qui cache la colonie. **Et un assouplissement de la législation ouvrirait la voie au trafic d'espèces protégées, troisième trafic au monde après le commerce de la drogue et des armes.** «*Derrière le flamant nain, on aura l'ibis chauve, le courlis esquimau, le courlis à bec grêle, le bouvreuil des Açores, des espèces qui figurent sur les listes rouges de l'UICN [Union internationale pour la Conservation de la Nature]*», s'inquiète Raymond Léost. D'après lui, la détention d'animaux sauvages est inadmissible car «*autoriser la détention d'oiseaux menacés, c'est inciter au prélèvement dans le milieu naturel*».

«Marchandise». En tout cas, Cornel Roels, le vendeur de flamants, lui, n'est pas ennuyé. Son entreprise a pourtant perchoir sur rue. Sur son site, il propose des flamants nains, «*uniquement sur commande ferme*», qu'il va chercher en Belgique. Et il estime la loi française contraire à la loi européenne. «*Ces oiseaux doivent circuler librement dans tous les pays européens. On peut en acheter en Belgique, en Espagne, et pas en France ? La loi française est contraire aux articles 28 à 30 du Traité de Rome, relatifs à la libre circulation des marchandises.*» Avec un tel raisonnement, la France devrait autoriser la vente du cannabis dès demain au prétexte que les Pays-Bas en autorisent le commerce. Il n'empêche, Cornel Roels s'estime floué. Peut-être serait-il temps d'harmoniser les législations européennes en matière d'oiseaux. Par le haut.



VENERDI 17 APRILE SI VUOLE CHIUDERE IL CENTRO CARAPAX – PETIZIONE D’AIUTO

Venerdi 17 aprile, cioè venerdi dopo Pasqua, la Comunità Montana di Massa Marittima vuole chiudere il Centro Carapax, e prenderne TUTTA la gestione estromettendoci. Si tenta quindi di rubare 20 anni di duro lavoro di noi e di centinaia di volontari, quasi 3 milioni di euro di investimenti da parte dell'Unione Europea, di privati, di associazioni e fondazioni, e 17.000 animali sotto la tutela e responsabilità della International Rana Foundation, e di proprietà di migliaia di soci, enti parchi italiani e esteri, spesso in prestito a scopo di riproduttivo per la salvaguardia della specie. Si mette così a repentaglio la vita di tanti animali, si vuole distruggere una decina di posti di lavoro. E' un'offesa per 2000 volontari di tutta la Toscana, di tutta l'Italia, di tutto l'Europa, che in questi 20 anni hanno reso il Centro Carapax grande!

AIUTATECI AD IMPEDIRE QUESTO FIRMANDO LA PETIZIONE andando sul sito www.carapax.it. GRAZIE

CRIMINAL ACT

AGAINST EUROPE'S FIRST TURTLE AND TORTOISE RESCUE CENTRE!

On next April 17th at 9 o' clock AM the local "comunità montana" wants to put the whole centre under sequester and to close it down.

After 20 years of hard work of 2000 volunteers, now 3 days after Easter, the comunità montana tries to steal 7 people's job, stealing know how, 3 million Euro investments in structures financed by private societies, private persons and the EU as well as stealing and putting at risk 17.000 chelonians, under the responsibility of the international RANA Foundation, 100 White Storks, who are breeding now, and 11 Donkeys and putting al these fragile creatures in the hands of incompetent people! **This must be stopped IMMEDIATELY and therefore sign the petition you'll find on www.carapax.org**. Thanks

VRIJDAG 17 APRIL KOMT MEN CARAPAX IN BESLAG NEMEN!

TEKEN MEE DE PETITIE AAN DE MINISTER EN DE EUROPESE KOMMISSIE OM DIT TE VERHINDEREN!

De intercomunale van Massa Marittima die al jaren CARAPAX pest, heeft het gedaa gekregen om een bewarend beslag uit te voeren op de gebouwen van CARAPAX in afwachting van een definitive uitspraak. Nu blijkt dat men onder vals voorwendsel CARAPAX gewoonweg wil sluiten, het personeel naar huis sturen en 20 jaar hard werk, van 2000 vrijwilligers, alle strukturen, 17.000 dieren, en 3 miljoen Euro investering van de Europese Unie, van RANA, sponsorende bedrijven en van 25.000 steunende leden probeert TE STELEN.

Teken onmiddelijk deze petitie om deze dreiging af te wenden www.carapax.org .Bedankt

VENDREDI 17 AVRIL ON ESSAIERA DE METTRE SOUS SEQUESTRE TOUT LE CENTRE CARAPAX ET DE LE FERMER.

La Comunità Montana locale qui nous harcèle déjà depuis des années a réussi à obtenir un séquestre d'un bâtiment de CARAPAX en attente d'une conclusion de contentieux juridique prévue en janvier 2010. Maintenant on essaie d'étendre cela au séquestre de tout le centre, ses 17.000 animaux, renvoyer le personnel et cela, après 20 années de dur travail de la part de 2000 bénévoles. Il s'agit de METTRE LA MAIN sur toutes les structures, 3 millions d'Euros d'investissements de l'Union Européenne, de RANA, des entreprises sponsors et de 25.000 membres bienfaiteurs.

AIDEZ-NOUS A ARRETER CETTE FOLIE ET SIGNEZ LA PETITION QUI SE TROUVE SUR LE SITE www.carapax.org Merci



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Logo : Pierre DEOM, rédacteur de La Hulotte

Soutien : Soptom (France) - Carapax (Italie) - CRT (Espagne)

Informations : Herdigest (U.S.A)

