Status of Chelonians in Paraguay

Assessed by Thomas & Sabine Vinke (Chaco, Phrynops hilarii) and Pier Cacciali (Región Oriental).

Acanthochelys macrocephala

<u>Distribution</u>: Paraguayan Pantanal, Wet Chaco, in part dry Chaco. <u>Habitat</u>: Associated to wet lands <u>Threats</u>: Habitat destruction. <u>Population status</u>: Probably of lower concern., but is not known in any protected area <u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation.

Acanthochelys pallidipectoris

Distribution: South-western Chaco.

Habitat: Dry Chaco highly depending of impenetrable clay soil.

<u>Threats</u>: Habitat destruction, especially its micro habitats by using the soil for building high tanks for cattle.

Population status : Unknown, probably declining.

<u>Recommended classification</u>: EN due to extreme habitat lost in the past and expected habitat lost in the near future.

Chelonidis carbonaria

<u>Distribution</u>: Occidental region (Chaco), isolated in Concepción, further findings in the eastern part of Paraguay seem to be wiped out.

<u>Habitat</u>: Xerophytic forest, palm savannah. Highly depending of the presence of the giant armadillos (*Priodontes maximus*) which build burrows, because they don't find sufficient shelter and don't have the capacity to dig.

<u>Threats</u>: Habitat destruction, severe decrease of Giant armadillos, illegal trade, and probably climate change, because severe drought increased significantly as well as extreme temperatures, long cold phases in winter and extreme hot in summer.

<u>Population status</u>: Occurs in the National Park Defensores del Chaco, Teniente Enciso, and Medanos. Within the parks the populations seem to be stabile, but they are poached as nutrition source of the ethnic of Ayoreo and for pets within Paraguay even in the protected areas.

<u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation of the influence of the obvious climate change (droughts, extreme temperatures).

<u>Recommended classification in Paraguay</u>: EN due to extreme habitat lost in the past and expected habitat lost in the near future.

Chelonoidis chilensis

Distribution: Western part of the Occidental region (Dry Chaco).

Habitat: Xerophytic forest.

<u>Threats</u>: Habitat destruction, pet trade, probably climate change (we found various dead specimens in our private nature reserve after the drought of 2008-2009)

<u>Population status</u>: Occurs in the National Park Defensores del Chaco, Teniente Enciso, and Medanos. The population status seems to be much safer than for *C. carbonaria*. At least in a short time view the populations survive at extensive cattle farms which are the main reason of habitat lost. In opposite to *C. carbonaria* they can survive in that portions of farms which are protected by law and have to be unchanged. <u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation whether the isolated populations at the cattle farms can survive in long-term or which other effects occur. Furthermore investigation of the influence of the obvious climate change (droughts, extreme temperatures).

<u>Recommended classification in Paraguay</u>: Habitat lost in the past and expected habitat lost in the near future are the same like in the case of *C. carbonaria*, but due to its (possible) adoptions at the altered habitat seems to be VU appropriate.

Kinosternon scorpioides

Distribution Occidental region (Chaco).

<u>Habitat</u>: Xerophytic forest, any kind of water body (road drainages, artificial ponds that supply water to the cattle, temporarily flooded natural low lands)

Threats: Habitat destruction, climate change.

<u>Population status</u>: Occurs in the National Park Defensores del Chaco, Teniente Enciso, and probably Medanos. Populations seem to be stabile. Because they use artificial water resources brought into the Chaco by cattle farming, they seem to be under the winners of habitat change.

<u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation of the influence of the obvious climate change (droughts, extreme temperatures).

Recommended classification in Paraguay: LR or DD.

Hydromedusa tectifera

Distribution: Southeast of Paraguay.

<u>Habitat</u>: Associated to streams, and occasionally at lentic waterbodies. Refuges und trunks of trees and in the soil.

<u>Threats</u>: Habitat destruction and contamination of the water.

<u>Population status</u>: Unknown. The species is common in the National Park San Rafael.

<u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation of monitoring in the wild and in other protected areas could check the presence and the population status in further parks.

Mesoclemmys vanderhaegei

Distribution: Northeast of Paraguay.

Habitat: Seems to be in relation to lacustrine habitats and pasture.

<u>Threats</u>: Poaching and habitat destruction seem to be the main factors of risks for the survival of that species.

<u>Population status</u>: Unknown. Populations exist at the Reserva Natural del Bosque Mbaracayú. <u>Recommendations</u>: Population studies at the Reserva Natural del Bosque Mbaracayú could indicate the effect of poaching of the native ethnics which live within that reserve.

Phrynops geoffroanus

Distribution: The concrete distribution of that species in Paraguay is unknown.

<u>Habitat</u>: unknown

<u>Threats</u>: Because the distribution is unknown, threats can't be named.

<u>Population status</u>: Although the absence of concrete data for Paraguay, it can be named as extremely rare due to it's sparse registration. It's not known to be found in any of the protected areas in Paraguay.

<u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation of any kind to clarify the situation in Paraguay.

Phrynops hilarii

Distribution: Close to the Río Paraguay.

Habitat: Apparently associated with the Río Paraguay.

<u>Threats</u>: habitat destruction is apparently the mayor threat for that species.

<u>Population status</u>: Unknown. Not known to inhabit any protected area. . <u>Recommendations</u>: Investigation of any kind to clarify the situation in Paraguay.

Phrynops williamsi

Distribution: South of Paraguay.

Habitat: Apparently associated with the Río Paraguay.

<u>Threats</u>: habitat destruction is apparently the mayor threat for that species.

Population status : Unknown. Not known to inhabit any protected area. .

<u>Recommendations</u>: Studying the nature reserves whether this rare species really does not inhabite them, furthermore population status of that nearly unknown species.