



Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 151 (2010) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 9 December 2010, on protection of the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in the Massif des Maures and Plaine des Maures localities (Var) in France

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats;

Having regard to Resolution (78) 22 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on threatened amphibians and reptiles in Europe;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 26 (1991) on the conservation of some threatened reptiles in Europe, recommending that “*the French Government protect as a nature reserve the habitat of *Testudo hermanni* in the Massif and the Plaine des Maures, thus removing further threats from development*”;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 59 (1997) on the drafting and implementation of action plans for threatened wild fauna species;

Recalling its Guidelines of 1993 to be taken into account in recovery plans for species of amphibians and reptiles;

Recalling that Article 3 of the Convention provides that each Contracting Party shall take the necessary steps to promote national policies for the conservation of wild flora, wild fauna and natural habitats, with particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species, especially endemic ones, and endangered habitats;

Recalling that Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides that each Contracting Party shall take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of the wild flora and fauna species, especially those specified in Appendices I and II, and the conservation of endangered natural habitats;

Referring to the other provisions of the Convention relating to protection of habitats and conservation of species;

Taking into consideration the report drawn up the expert after his on-the-spot appraisal [T-PVS/Files (2010) 25] ;

Recalling that the Plaine des Maures locality in the département of Var, France, comprises not only an exceptional site for the preservation of the Hermann tortoise, a strictly protected species listed in Appendix II to the Convention, but that the plain and the Massif des Maures also constitute, together with a small population in Spain, the last European retention site for continental populations of the species;

Considering that the transformation and destruction of the specific habitats constitute the most fundamental threat to which the species is exposed;

Considering that systematic account has been taken of the 13 points made in Recommendation No. 118;

Observing that in the meantime several schemes (urban build-up, clearance of vegetation for grape-growing, extension of refuse tips, etc.), which have been allowed to go ahead without proper control or co-ordination by the administrative authorities have irreversibly impaired wide expanses of vital habitats for the tortoises and numerous protected species;

Aware of the threats posed by the LGV (high-speed rail-link) project and the need to make advance preparations for the integration of new transport infrastructure in the limited area of the Plaine des Maures;

Having taken note of the publication of the Biotope Protection Order concerning the Saint-André-La Pardiguière area in March 2006;

Having taken note of the publication of the decree concerning the creation of a national nature reserve on the Plaine des Maures in June 2009;

Having taken note of the publication of the National Action Plan to protect the Hermann Tortoise in France in November 2009;

Stressing the need to take the additional measures warranted by the conservation requirements of the species and to adopt a more detailed and comprehensive approach to the problem,

Recommends that the French Government:

1. Rapidly appoint a team of managers with responsibility for both maintenance work and scientific activities. The team should also be capable of organising the monitoring of the habitats and populations of Hermann Tortoise throughout the entire range situated outside the reserve, as identified in the National Action Plan (PNA);
2. Continue to actively seek alternatives to the Balançon waste storage centre, which is to be closed in 2012. These alternatives should, insofar as possible, be situated outside the specific range identified or at all events not restrict the potential habitats of this species any further;
3. Conduct rigorous monitoring of the application of the reduction, compensation and accompanying measures that will be taken as part of the “Combes Jauffret” housing project, which is justified by overriding public interests of a social nature, and keep the Standing Committee informed;
4. Establish from the outset the conditions in which the high-speed rail link that is to cross the Plaine des Maures will be carried out, fixing in advance priority principles which will make it possible to take account of all natural habitats, restore ecological networks to their original state and protect tortoise populations;
5. Ensure the active implementation of the action plan by focusing on priorities corresponding to objectives 1 – 2 – 3 and 7, i.e. to take better account of the conservation requirements of the species, conserve a coherent network of favourable sites and populations, maintain and develop favourable habitats and base directives and conservation activities on scientific knowledge and appraisals. The aim is to rapidly have scientific references and ecosystem models which can serve as a basis for long-term management and as an example for other species and other sites.