Denver Zoo Hatches Komodo Dragons

The Denver Zoo announced the hatching of four Komodo dragons (*Varanus komodoensis*), with four others expected to hatch shortly. This marks the third time the facility has hatched this species. The zoo’s last breeding success occurred in 2003. Denver Zoo is the second Northern American facility to produce Komodo dragons this year; the other being the Los Angeles Zoo (see *Biawak* 4(3): 79). The hatchlings will eventually be put on public display.

*Source: http://denverpost.com; 16 November 2010*

Malaysian Officials Seize Monitor Lizards in Raid

Malaysian officials at the Wildlife and National Parks Department seized several monitor lizards (*Varanus sp.*) along with more than fifty other animals in a raid on two farms owned by convicted wildlife trafficker Anson Wong. Nicknamed the “Lizard King”, Wong first gained notoriety with his conviction in 2000 of wildlife trafficking and was sentenced earlier this year on yet another count. The animals, seized from Wong’s farms at Teluk Bahang and Balik Pulau, have been temporarily sent to the Penang National Park.

*Source: New Straits Times; 8 November 2010*

Finnish Zoo Receives Eggs from Black Water Monitor

The Helsinki Tropicario announced that their black water monitors (*Varanus salvator ‘komaini’*) have laid several eggs. This form (downgraded to synonymy with the widespread *V. s. macromaculatus* several years ago) has rarely been reproduced in captivity. Only two previous successes are known; in 2007 and 2008, both in Costa Rica (see Dwyer & Perez. 2007. *Biawak* 1[1]: 13-20 and

*Varanus g. griseus* seizes *Uromastyx*. Assoumaan Desert, Central Province, Saudi Arabia. Photograph by **Ibrahim S. Abu-Neamah** http://www.flickr.com/photos/23576634@N08/
Dwyer & Perez. 2007. Biawak 1[2]: 89). At least two eggs from the clutch are believed to be viable, and the young are expected to hatch in eight to ten months. The three animals held by this facility are believed to be the only specimens of this *Varanus salvator* race to be held in public European collections.

*Source: Helsingin Sanomat; 28 October 2010*

Monitor Lizard Skins Seized in Alaska

An illegal shipment of monitor lizard (*Varanus* sp.) skins on its way from New York to Taiwan was seized by USFWS inspectors. Officials confiscated them due to problems with the shipping invoice. Notice that the skins, worth over $4,200 USD, were seized and if no one comes forward to claim them, they may end up being auctioned off.

*Source: Anchorage Daily News; 26 November 2010*

Organization Details Reptile Skin Trade Practices

The organization Rainforest Rescue (http://www.rainforest-rescue.org/) has detailed practices in the Indonesian reptile leather trade which appear to demonstrate excessive animal cruelty and what is likely an unsustainable harvest from wild areas. The Swiss news broadcast “*Rundschau*” aired video depicting processing routines including the confinement of large numbers of animals in constrained and cramped conditions for days, as well as excessively cruel slaughter methods including the skinning of still-living water monitors (*Varanus salvator*) and the use of water hoses inserted into live snakes in order to stretch them. The CEO of Swiss watch manufacturer Swatch has promised to eliminate products which are obtained by ‘dubious’ means. However, other companies were less responsive. Cartier and Hermès both stated merely that their companies follow existing laws and the Swiss company Bally responded that their products come from Indonesian breeding farms; the existence of which was disputed by Swiss officials. Another implicated company, Gucci, had no comment.
Jean-Daniel Pasche, the chairman of the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry, also did not comment since the issue of animal welfare has not yet been addressed by the respective companies.

Besides the issues of animal cruelty, questions have also been raised concerning sustainability. Export quotas are set by the individual nations, often with little or no scientific basis, and even these limits are readily ignored according to the non-governmental organization TRAFFIC. False documentation is commonly used; often by smuggling animals into Malaysia to be listed as exports from that country instead. Though specific studies on population declines are not given, numbers of animals taken by collectors have fallen sharply recently presenting problems for sustainability, biodiversity, and ecological balance.

Source: Rainforest Rescue; 22 October 2010

Monitor skins are bleached before they are stained and processed into high-quality leather products for western consumers. Skin factory, Macassar, SW Sulawesi, Indonesia. Photograph by André Koch.
International Symposium at ZFMK Honoring Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Böhme

On 20 November 2010, an international symposium honoring Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Böhme was held at the Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK) in Bonn, Germany, on the occasion of his retirement after 39 years of professional work at ZFMK.

Attended by almost 100 friends, colleagues, and family members from Germany, Europe, and the United States, the symposium began with an opening address by Johann Wolfgang Wägele, director of the Museum Alexander Koenig. He gave a short introduction to Wolfgang Böhme’s vita and emphasized his merits for the ZFMK over almost 40 years. Next, Philipp Wagner (ZFMK) held a talk about African herpetology, another focus of Wolfgang Böhme’s research. After a coffee break, Miguel Vences (University of Braunschweig) presented new insights into the phylogeny and diversity of the Chamaeleonidae, comparing Wolfgang Böhme’s results and hypotheses in hemipenial morphology about the relationships of chameleons with new findings from molecular studies. Before lunch break, André Koch (ZFMK) introduced the audience to “The Monitor Man” and told “A Story of Stunning Discoveries and Charismatic Creatures” — the story of Wolfgang Böhme’s numerous contributions to monitor research including the descriptions of several new species (for details see Koch et al. on page 122 of this issue).

In the afternoon, participants of the symposium had the opportunity to attend a guided tour with Wolfgang Böhme through the herpetology collection. Led by André Koch, the leaders of the AG-Warane (Kay Dittmar) and the Waranforum (Frank Mohr) together with Mrs. Kielmann, used this time for a detailed look at the monitor lizard collection at the ZFMK. Wolfram Freund (ZFMK) opened the afternoon session with an entertaining talk about 29 years of expeditions to the Neusiedler See (Lake Neusiedl), Austria/Hungry, by Wolfgang Böhme. The symposium was closed with a laudatio in honor of Wolfgang Böhme given by Aaron Bauer (Philadelphia), a close friend and colleague since the early 1980s, who emphasized that the knowledge and broad research interests of Wolfgang Böhme’s were not restricted to amphibians and reptiles, but also included mammalogy, ornithology, paleontology, cryptozoology, the history of herpetology, and zoo-ethnology.

A special issue of the Bonn Zoological Bulletin published by the Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig (http://zfmk.de/web/Forschung/Beitraege/index.en.html) is dedicated to Wolfgang Böhme. Among others, it contains an updated checklist of the living monitor lizards of the world by Koch et al. (for details see the Recent Publications section of this issue).
Announcement of the Third Annual Meeting of the “AG Warane” of the DGHT

The AG Warane is pleased to announce that its third annual meeting is in preparation. The meeting will take place on 9-10 April 2011 at the Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig in Bonn, where the three Multidisciplinary World Conferences on Monitor Lizards were held in 1989, 1997 and 2005. For the first time, the annual meeting will last two days. This should give attendees enough time for conversation and exchange of experiences. The meeting starts on Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

Location:
Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig
Adenauerallee 160
53113 Bonn
http://zfmk.de

Preliminary Program:

Saturday, 9 April 2011

10:15 a.m. Welcome Address by the leaders of the AG-Warane
10:30 a.m. Frank Mohr (Würzburg): “Keeping and breeding of Varanus kordensis with remarks on keeping tree monitors in groups” (in German).
11:00 a.m. Ralf Sommerlad (Frankfurt) and Natascha Behler (Bonn): “Danau Mesangat: Basics and update about an exciting conservation project in Borneo” (in German).
12-13 p.m. Lunch break
13:00 p.m. Departure to the Cologne Zoo (with own cars or public transport)
14-17 p.m. Visit of the Cologne Zoo (possibly with guided tour through the Aquarium)
18:00 p.m. Return trip

Sunday, 10 April 2011

10:00 a.m. Start
10:15 a.m. André Koch (Bonn): “The Monitor Man: Wolfgang Böhme’s contributions to monitor lizard research” (in German). See essay by Koch et al. in this issue of Biawak, pp. 122-142.
10:45 a.m. Thomas Hörenberg (Stuttgart): “Keeping and breeding of Varanus t. tristis” (in German).
11:15 a.m. General meeting of the members of the AG-Warane (incl. executive board member elections)
12-13 p.m. Lunch break
13-14 p.m. Guided tour through the exhibit of the Museum Alexander Koenig (André Koch)
15:00 p.m. End of the annual meeting 2011

Further information can be found in early 2011 on the AG Warane homepage at www.ag-warane.de, or contact Kay Uwe Dittmar (working group leader) at dittmar@ag-warane.de or André Koch (scientific leader) at a.koch.zfmk@uni-bonn.de.