

Erste Ergebnisse zur Verbreitung und zum Status der Europäischen Sumpfschildkröte (*Emys orbicularis*) am nördlichen Rand ihrer Verbreitung in Litauen und Lettland

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First results on the distribution and condition of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) at the northern edge of its distribution in Lithuania and Latvia

We give a first overview on the distribution and the condition of South-Lithuanian and Latvian populations of the European pond turtle, *Emys orbicularis*. Between 1997 and 2004, surveys of turtle occurrences in the Alytus district in South-Lithuania and different investigations on a local population in the area Kuciuliske/South-Lithuania were led. The aim of the study was to make a first assessment of the current status of local populations at the border of the species' range possible. The more exact knowledge of the population biology of the local population Kuciuliske should help to evaluate the survivability of this local population and additionally, the situation of the neighbour-populations. Only five of 13 investigated populations can be classified as survivable at present, six populations as threatened and two further as becoming extinct. In Latvia information about occurrences of *Emys orbicularis* was collected with the help of interviews between 1985 and 2005 in order to get clues on the distribution of the species in the country. Altogether, 36 reports with turtle observations could be gathered. Further 24 animals, who were caught by natives, became known during the investigations. The observation data are concentrated in five regions, juveniles could be registered in four of them. Between 1997 and 2002 neither a possible individual exchange with neighbour-populations nor clear fluctuations of the population size could be noticed for the local population Kuciuliske. A sex ratio of 1 : 3,1 was determined. Within two investigation years the mortality rate of the adult turtles amounted to at most 3 %. The local population is assessed as survivable in the present situation. The individual number is enough for a short-term survival at least (individual number: 60–70 animals; individual density: 0.6–0.7 animals/has). The age structure is despite the big share in old individuals (49 %) not superannuated and the juvenile share of 23 % is to classify as sufficient for the survivability. The population structure can be understood as adaptation to the given circumstances at the northern edge of the species' distribution.

Key words: Reptilia, Testudines, Emydidae, *Emys orbicularis*, distribution, population biology, Lithuania, Latvia.

Zusammenfassung

Wir geben einen ersten Überblick über die Verbreitung und den Zustand südlitauischer und lettischer Vorkommen der Europäischen Sumpfschildkröte, *Emys orbicularis*. Zwischen 1997 und 2004 wurden Kartierungen zu Vorkommen des Alytus Dist-