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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Radiated Tortoise

Astrochelys radiata

Astrochelys radiata is a large, long-lived tortoise from southern Madagascar. The high, black shell is decorated with yellow rays from the centre of each scute, and the animal is regarded as one of the most beautiful tortoises in the world. The species is critically endangered in the wild and requires a great deal of space, warmth and an outdoor enclosure in summer.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Geochelone radiata; Testudo radiata*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**26-40 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**2,500-8,800 g**
Lifespan	**60-80 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and dry forest**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**300 × 150 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-30 °C**
Basking spot	**32-38 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**50-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-12 eggs**
Incubation	**90-231 days** at 29-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix I**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Critically Endangered (CR)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	*Astrochelys radiata* is a large and heavily built tortoise that requires a great deal of space. Keep it outdoors for as long as the weather allows, in a secure enclosure with shade, shelter and edible vegetation.
TEMPERATURE	Fixed figures for air and night temperature have not been documented for the species. The figures here and the Ferguson zone under Light are borrowed from related tortoises from dry regions, e.g. *Stigmochelys pardalis*.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from a dry climate, and the humidity should be moderate: at least about 50 %, highest for the young and in the hatching box.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*A. radiata* is diurnal and needs natural sunlight or strong UVB light in order to make vitamin D3 and avoid bone disease. Outdoors in the sun the animal gets UVB directly, but glass and acrylic block most of it.
FEEDING	*A. radiata* is a grazer, and the diet should be high in fibre, low in protein and rich in calcium.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is calm and hardy and adapts well to captivity. Young and newly hatched animals are easily stressed by too much handling and by frequent changes in their surroundings, so keep handling to a minimum.
NATIVE RANGE	Madagascar.