

WILDLIFE RESERVES SINGAPORE SENDS 36 EXOTIC TORTOISES TO FORT WORTH ZOO IN TIE-UP WITH US CONSERVATION GROUP

Singapore, 1 Jul 2010 – Wildlife Reserves Singapore, parent company of award-winning attractions Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari, Singapore Zoo and the upcoming River Safari, recently sent 36 Indian star tortoises to Fort Worth Zoo in Texas, in a first-time partnership with the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA).

TSA, a US-based conservation group, supports and manages recovery programmes for endangered turtles and tortoises around the world. Mostly donations from the public or confiscations from the police and Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore, some of these tortoises have been kept at the Singapore Zoo for nearly two years, as it is illegal to keep Indian star tortoises as pets in Singapore.

This first shipment of Indian star tortoises marks the start of a long-term exchange between WRS and TSA to re-home exotic and endangered turtles and tortoises. The tortoises, which have arrived in Texas, will be distributed to TSA partner zoos across the United States, such as the Fort Worth Zoo, to be integrated in breeding programmes and educational animal exhibits.

Native to India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, the Indian star tortoise is one of the most prized breeds in the international exotic pet trade because of its beautifully coloured patterned shell. It fetches a high profit margin and is very popular in overseas markets such as the United States and other European countries. One tortoise can cost as little as \$5 in India, over \$100 in Singapore, and as much as \$1,000 in the United States.

Raising these animals in captivity is challenging and usually leads to the demise of these precious tortoises as they are picky eaters.

“Such exotic animals should not be kept as pets and their well-being should be left in the care of experts,” said Ms Fanny Lai, WRS’ Group CEO. “WRS continues to work with other



institutions to ensure confiscated or donated animals are well-placed in reputable wildlife institutions, repatriated or where possible, rehabilitated and released into the wild.”



A box of Indian Star Tortoises en route to Fort Worth Zoo from Singapore. Their black shells with striking yellow ridges make them popular exotic pets.



Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) assistant curator, Bernard Santhosh, scans one of the tortoises to ensure it's the correct one slated for this shipment. All WRS animals are microchipped for easy identification across borders.



Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) assistant curator Bernard Santhosh gently places the tortoises into compartmentalised boxes to ensure their safe and comfortable journey to the United States. These tortoises can grow to as long as ten inches. One of its unique traits is the shape of its shell which naturally assists the tortoise to return to a stable stance after it has been turned over.

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ABOUT SINGAPORE ZOO

Set in a rainforest environment, Singapore Zoo's world famous "Open Concept" offers the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the wonders of nature. Home to over 2,500 specimens from 315 species, 29% of which are threatened, the Zoo has attained a strong reputation internationally for its conservation initiatives and breeding programmes. To better meet the healthcare needs of its animals and working towards its aspiration to become a leading global centre of excellence for veterinary healthcare and research, a purpose-built Wildlife Healthcare and Research Centre was set up in March 2006. In 2009, 1.6 million visitors enjoyed the experiential learning experience at the 28-hectare award-winning Zoo. Singapore Zoo is part of Wildlife Reserves Singapore. The Zoo is a designated rescued wildlife centre by the governing authority.

Singapore Zoo is located at 80 Mandai Lake Road Singapore 729826. More information can be found at www.zoo.com.sg

ABOUT WILDLIFE RESERVES SINGAPORE

Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) is the parent company of award-winning attractions Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari, Singapore Zoo and the upcoming River Safari. WRS parks

strive to be world-class leisure attractions, providing excellent exhibits of animals presented in their natural environment for the purpose of conservation, education and recreation.

In the areas of conservation and research, WRS parks have undertaken multiple projects through collaborations with various organizations and institutions on the oriental pied hornbill, pangolin and orang utan. Highly popular with tourists and locals, Jurong Bird Park welcomed 900,000 visitors, the Night Safari, more than 1.1 million, and Singapore Zoo had over 1.6 million visitors in 2009.

More information can be found at www.wrs.com.sg

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