
LEARNING ABOUT HEAD-STARTING TURTLES FROM A SYMPOSIUM

R. BRUCE BURY¹

¹*Editor-in-Chief, Herpetological Conservation and Biology*

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As Editor-in-Chief of Herpetological Conservation and Biology, I have the pleasure to oversee submitted manuscripts from a wide variety of topics. About 2 years ago, Russell Burke approached us about including papers from a symposium (Head-starting Turtles) at the 2010 Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. Early on, he stated these intentions to HCB: "My goals are to encourage people involved in turtle head-starting projects to address academic concerns, to compare a series of examples of serious head-starting projects using a common set of criteria for success, and to learn which, if any, conservation practices are more likely to lead to success. It is not the goal of this symposium to present head-starting as the solution to all turtle conservation problems, or even to promote head-starting itself." We entertained his motion with the caveat that he arrange for initial peer reviews of material. This is the same model used in our earlier two symposia that were presented at the 6th World Congress of Herpetology in Manaus, Brazil: Reproduction in Reptiles (Thompson et al. 2010) and Herpetological Conservation and Biology (Murphy et al. 2010). We now have a selection of manuscripts on head-starting of turtles. Still, head-starting of turtles has generated considerable debate about its scope and usefulness (see this symposium), but we hope this offering helps to focus on the technical issues involved in the technique. Because of the potential controversial nature of the topic, I wish to set the stage. The stated goals of HCB are to welcome the submission of original experimental, descriptive, and/or inferential research, including forums

or synthesis of a topic (see Saumure. 2013. Instructions for Authors, Version 9.0. Available from <http://www.herpconbio.org/Instructions-ForAuthors.pdf> [Accessed 15 December 2013]). These have been special issues (monographs, symposia). The current collection falls under these headings. All HCB manuscripts (excluding announcements) are subjected to anonymous peer reviews to determine their acceptance. The editors attempt to serve in an advisory capacity as neutral judges. We assess the reviews (e.g., one positive, one rejection) and resolve differences (e.g., send the paper out for a third review). I and other HCB editors have our own take on practices such as head-starting turtles, but we strive to allow authors wide choice of topics and interpretations. For full disclosure, this symposium is not part of my interests as I prefer to study and protect turtles in the field (e.g., protect wild populations, improve habitats). Further, I have seen some cases of head-starting being over-promoted and have expressed some doubts over its use (see Bury et al. 2012). Still, I and HCB remain open minded to the topic and are willing to learn from new information. If any have other views, HCB has a place for rebuttals (under Point-Counterpoint), but we insist on civility in all matters. Thus, we welcome the hard work of Russell Burke and his team who organized and brought to fruition this special session to our readership. As his introduction points out, he tried to convene a balance of studies on the topic yet moved forward with those manuscripts that he received. Lastly, I thank Stan Trauth, Special Publication Editor, along with the HCB editorial staff (all dedicated

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volunteers behind the scenes), for shepherding the manuscripts through the editorial processes.

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