

Western Hermann's Tortoise
(Testudo hermanni hermanni)
North American Regional Studbook

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INTRODUCTION

Also known as the Italian tortoise, the Western Hermann's tortoise is found only in disjoint populations on the mainland of Italy, the Italian islands of Sicily and Sardinia, southern France including the island of Corsica and also in Spain together with the Balearic Islands Majorca and Menorca. It is one of two currently recognized subspecies of Hermann's tortoise and remains the rarest. This tortoise once occupied a more expansive range in its native countries but has since been reduced to very small population numbers and a rather restricted distribution today. Severe over-collection for the pet trade in earlier years, habitat destruction, pollution and predation has had detrimental effects on wild *Testudo hermanni hermanni* inhabitants. Many areas where they once thrived are now vacant of any specimens at all. A small and vulnerable tortoise, *T. hermanni hermanni* stands little chance of survival in several areas where they currently exist. Many of these locations are major tourist attractions thus aiding in the continuation of tortoises being in the inevitable presence of man. The introduction and success of predatory animals such as the wild boar only increase the mortality rate of wild individuals and only a tiny percentage of hatchlings actually make it to adulthood. Even as adults these tortoises may not survive beyond the age of 20 to 30 years in nature as they succumb to wild fires and females are crushed on roadways while searching for nesting sites. With an average clutch size of usually no more than 2 to 3 eggs and a low fertility rate, it is difficult for *Testudo hermanni hermanni* to make any kind of "dent" in rebuilding already brutally damaged populations without human intervention. While some organizations in their native lands have had success with head-starting and release programs, it is still difficult to say what kind of real future these tortoises have in our ever-changing world.

Today, *T. h. hermanni* is maintained in captivity within some countries in decent numbers. Various reports of propagation success and captive bred juveniles sometimes being available to the general public within the reptile community have been noted. However, this tortoise remains poorly understood and we find it stuck amidst the mass identity confusion already engulfing the species and subspecies belonging to the genus *Testudo*. It is this reason among others that they remain extremely rare in United States captive collections. Countless animals no longer exist entirely due to improper care and the mixing of them with other types of tortoises. Blood lines once pure have been utterly destroyed which can only be attributed to the cross breeding between themselves and their common Eastern cousins (*Testudo hermanni boettgeri*) in captivity. This irresponsible display of human error has resulted in the production of impure specimens which are then additionally bred into other colonies diluting the blood lines even further. The influx of these cross-bred tortoises has supplemented the identity crisis already associated with Hermann's and other Mediterranean tortoise species in a great way. This unfortunately has led to the disappearance of pure blooded *T. h. hermanni* in U.S. collections.

The purpose behind the creation of the Western Hermann's Tortoise North American Regional Studbook is education, awareness and protection. We must educate ourselves on the proper identification of the world's turtle and tortoise species and subspecies. Their specific needs and requirements can only truly be met once we gain the knowledge and understanding regarding them. We need to beware of the potential threats these creatures face globally both in captivity and in the wild in order to successfully protect their future and their fate. The safeguarding of *Testudo hermanni hermanni*

by means of a studbook allows us to closely monitor the existing specimens in our country, under our care to ensure their purity and proper placement (of offspring) within the community. In past decades the unsuitable keeping of these tortoises through mismanagement and misunderstanding has left us with very few notably pure specimens with real historic evidence. The “founder stock” listed in this studbook are accountable for the legitimate forthcoming of their kind in American collections today. Their wellbeing is of boundless importance.



Figure 1. Adult female *Testudo hermanni hermanni* from Tuscany, Italy. Photo by Chris Leone.

(Testudo hermanni hermanni) - Locality 1: Tuscany, Italy

Studbook #	Microchip #	Sex	Hatch Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Local ID	Date			Event Type
								M	D	Y	
1001	*****728	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1001L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1002	*****703	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1002L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1003	*****929	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1003L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1004	*****339	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C Zovickian, W	C1004L	6 9	7 30	2013 2013	Capture Purchase/Import Purchase/Transfer
1005	*****073	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1005L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1006	*****922	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1006L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1007	*****303	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1007L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1008	*****821	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1008L	6	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1009	*****117	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1009L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1010	*****384	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1010L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1011	*****351	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1011L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1012	*****829	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1012L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1013	*****283	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1013L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1014	*****729	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C	C1014L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
1015	*****687	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Tuscany, Italy Leone, C Zovickian, W	C1015L	8 9	7 30	2013 2013	Capture Purchase/Import Purchase/Transfer

Totals: 4.11.0 (15)

(*Testudo hermanni hermanni*) - Locality 2: Calabria, Italy

Studbook#	Microchip#	Sex	Hatch Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Local ID	Date			Event Type
								M	D	Y	
2001	*****982	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2001L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2002	*****979	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2002L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2003	*****182	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2003L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2004	*****949	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2004L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2005	*****727	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2005L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2006	*****794	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2006L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2007	*****356	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2007L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2008	*****615	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2008L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
2009	*****810	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2009L	8	7	2013	Capture Transfer/Import
2010	*****797	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Calabria, Italy Leone, C	C2010L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import

Totals: 2.8.0 (10)



Figure 2. Adult female *Testudo hermanni hermanni* from Calabria, Italy. Photo by Chris Leone.

(*Testudo hermanni hermanni*) - Locality 3: Sicily, Italy

Studbook#	Microchip#	Sex	Hatch Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Local ID	Date			Event Type
								M	D	Y	
3001	*****279	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3001L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3002	*****963	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3002L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3003	*****446	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3003L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3004	*****393	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3004L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3005	*****206	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3005L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3006	*****000	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3006L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3007	*****856	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3007L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
3008	*****444	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Sicily, Italy Leone, C	C3008L	8	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import

Totals: 3.5.0 (8)



Figure 3. Adult female *Testudo hermanni hermanni* from Sicily, Italy. Photo by Chris Leone.

(*Testudo hermanni hermanni*) - Locality 4: Majorca, Spain

Studbook#	Microchip#	Sex	Hatch Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Local ID	M	D	Y	Event Type
4001	*****128	M	N/A	WILD	WILD	Majorca Leone, C	C4001L	6	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
4002	*****551	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Majorca Leone, C	C4002L	6	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import
4003	*****489	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Majorca Leone, C	C2003L	6	7	2013	Capture Purchase/Import

Totals: 1.2.0 (3)



Figure 4. Adult male/female pair *Testudo hermanni hermanni* from Majorca, Spain. Photo by Chris Leone.

(*Testudo hermanni hermanni*) - Locality 5: Apulia, Italy

Studbook#	Microchip#	Sex	Hatch Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Local ID	M	D	Y	Event Type
5001	*****889	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	Ullmann, G Bailey, J Leone, C	C5001L	5	8	2009	Hatch Purchase/Transfer Purchase/Transfer
5002	*****393	F	N/A	WILD	WILD	Ullmann, G Leone, C	C5002L	?	??	2006	Capture Purchase/Transfer
5003	*****654	F	N/A	N/A	N/A	Ullmann, G Bailey, J Leone, C	C5003L	5	8	2009	Hatch Purchase/Transfer Purchase/Transfer
5004	*****721	F	N/A	N/A	N/A	Ullmann, G Heidecker, J Leone, C	C5004L	2	4	2009	Hatch Purchase/Transfer Purchase/Transfer
5005	*****635	F	5/29/2011	C5001L	C5004L	Leone, C	C5005L	5	29	2011	Hatch

Totals: 1.4.0 (5)



Figure 5. Adult female *Testudo hermanni hermanni* from Apulia, Italy. Photo by Chris Leone.

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