

# Conservation status and strategy of Hermann's Tortoise in France: threats, actions, prospects



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## Summary of the presentation :

- **Conservation status**
- **Key elements**
- **Threats**
- **Conservation strategy**
- **Actions taken**
- **General assessment**
- **Prospects**



## Conservation status

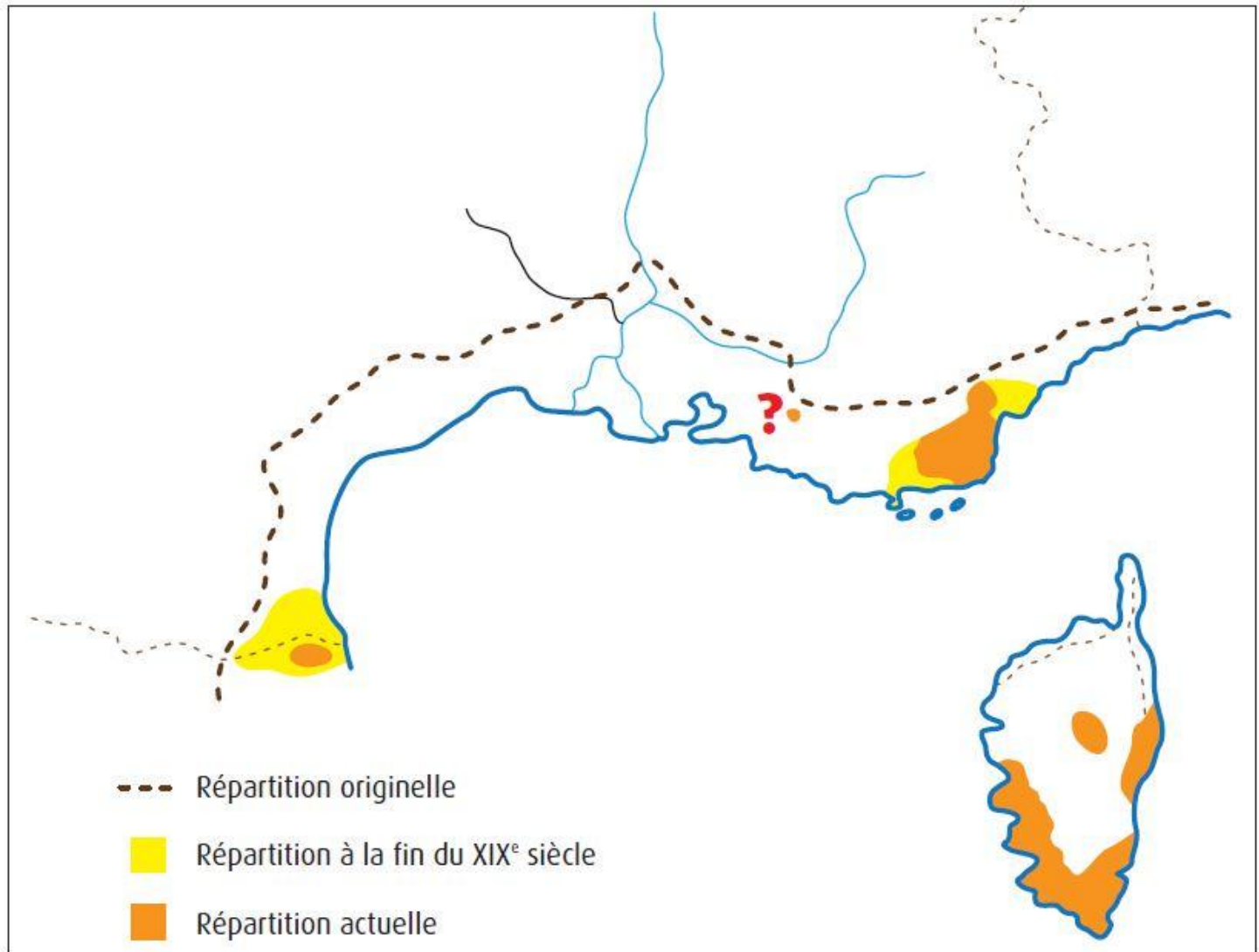
- International Union for Conservation of Nature classified the *Testudo hermanni*, as « Near threatened » on the world Red List
- But it is declining in the west of the range and more stable in the Balkans
- The subspecies *Testudo hermanni ssp hermanni* belong to the « Endangered » level for IUCN
- And classified as « Vulnerable » on the Red List for France
- Current distribution in France is 10% of historical area
- One of the three french regional populations has vanished (Eastern Pyrenees)
- Lots of Provençal sub-populations are with no doubts « Endangered »
- Decline is moderate for Corsican population but seems to accelerate
- Assesment is difficult due to its discreet behavior, demography and occurrence of pet animals in and out of its range



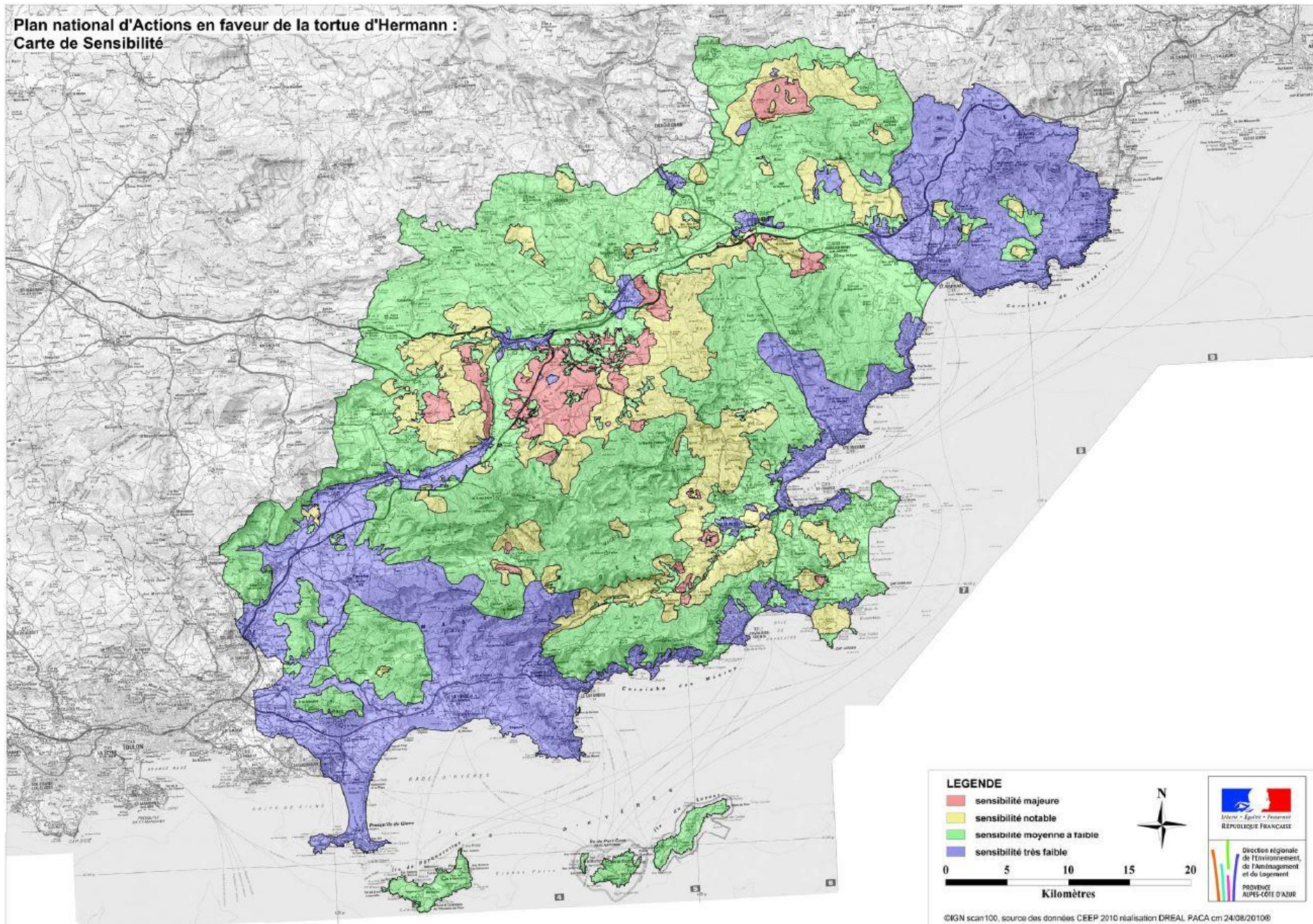
# Subspecies range



# Range in France

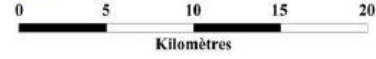


# Plan national d'Actions en faveur de la tortue d'Hermann : Carte de Sensibilité

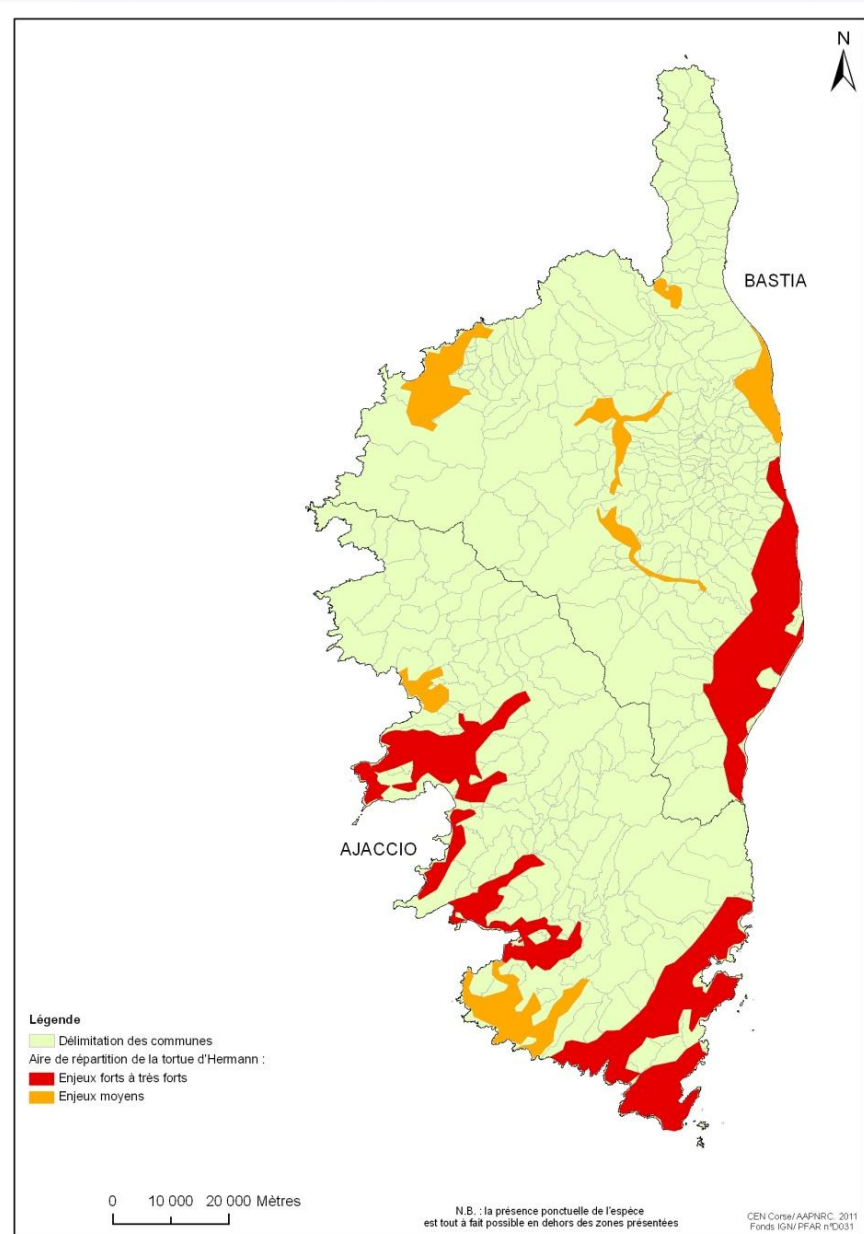


### LEGENDE

- sensibilité majeure
- sensibilité notable
- sensibilité moyenne à faible
- sensibilité très faible



# Range in Corsica



## Key elements about Hermann's tortoise:

- Hermann's tortoise is considered as an umbrella species
- An animal favored by the abundance of natural edges
- An animal considered friendly but sometimes too ...
- A robust animal but poorly adapted to rapid changes in its environment
- An animal adapted to various landscapes but with specific needs on a few hectares
- In France, its range has contracted on the most favorable habitats, especially open Cork oak woodlands with sparse scrubs











## Threats:

- Irreversible habitat loss,
- Forest fires,
- Degraded habitat quality,
- Unfavourable agricultural and forestry practices (including mechanization),
- Fragmentation,
- Predation and taking of individuals,
- Introduction of alien animals to natural populations











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# General conservation strategy led in France:

- 1- Reduce the causes of human-induced declines
- 2- Facilitate the recapture of lost spaces
- 3- Improving consideration of the case in public policy

## *Regional conservation strategies:*

### *In Provence*

- 1- Stop the populations declines
- 2- Increasing current population nuclei
- 3- Reconnect isolated subpopulations

### *In Corsica*

- 1- Maintain current population in a good state of conservation
- 2- Promote the development of populations on favorable habitats

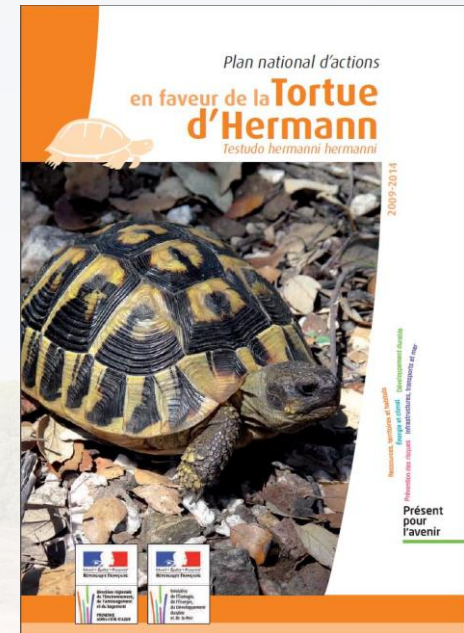
### *In the Roussillon - Eastern Pyrenees*

Consider the appropriateness and feasibility of reintroduction

# Operational Strategy of the first national action plan (PNA):

## *Eight specific objectives*

- 1- Improving consideration of species conservation needs
- 2- Keep a coherent network of suitable sites
- 3- Maintain and develop the favorable habitats
- 4- Reduce forest fire related threats
- 5- Limit losses of specimens
- 6- Avoid genetic or health weakened populations
- 7- Base the Action plan implementation on scientific knowledge
- 8- Involving the public in the species conservation



# Objectives translated in 93 actions:

## ***Currently 69 completed actions***

**For exemple:**

- Establish support maps for decision
- Establish protected areas (about 6 000 ha)
- Establish and ensure the operation of the N2000 network
- Write a management guide
- Establish and test a reintroduction protocol

## ***13 actions underway and should be continued in the long term***

**For exemple:**

- Informing the public
- Consider the tortoise in urban planning documents
- Managing favorable habitats (300 ha)
- Limit the effects of mechanized works
- Assess and monitor the health and genetic risks

## ***11 unrealized actions***

**For exemple:**

- Limit the increase of wild boar populations

## General assessment: progress and obstacles :

- A satisfactory level of knowledge
- An ambitious action plan
- Two European programs achieved
- Protected areas on the main cores population in Provence
- Significant habitat areas are now subject to management
- Awareness, mobilizing actors, significant efforts

### **But...**

- A contrasting situation between the Var and Corsica
- Difficulties maintaining optimum conditions for the long term
- Economic issues that weigh on its territory
- Persistent problems of representation of the image of the tortoise
- The large private stock of tortoises in captivity is difficult to manage
- Unfavourable agricultural developments
- Threats to which it is difficult to act (mechanization, forest fires)

## Perspectives on a possible future:

- A preserved site network that will develop
- Relict nuclei may continue their declines
- Reintroductions are possible in and out of its range
- A rural decline that continues with the consequence of increased mechanization
- Considerable awareness work to continue to associate the tortoise a wild animal picture
- Uncertainty about the health risks remains
- A permanent forest fire hazards likely to destroy subpopulations
- A range and densities that can still be reduced but also strengthen thanks to continuous efforts



**Thanks for your attention**



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