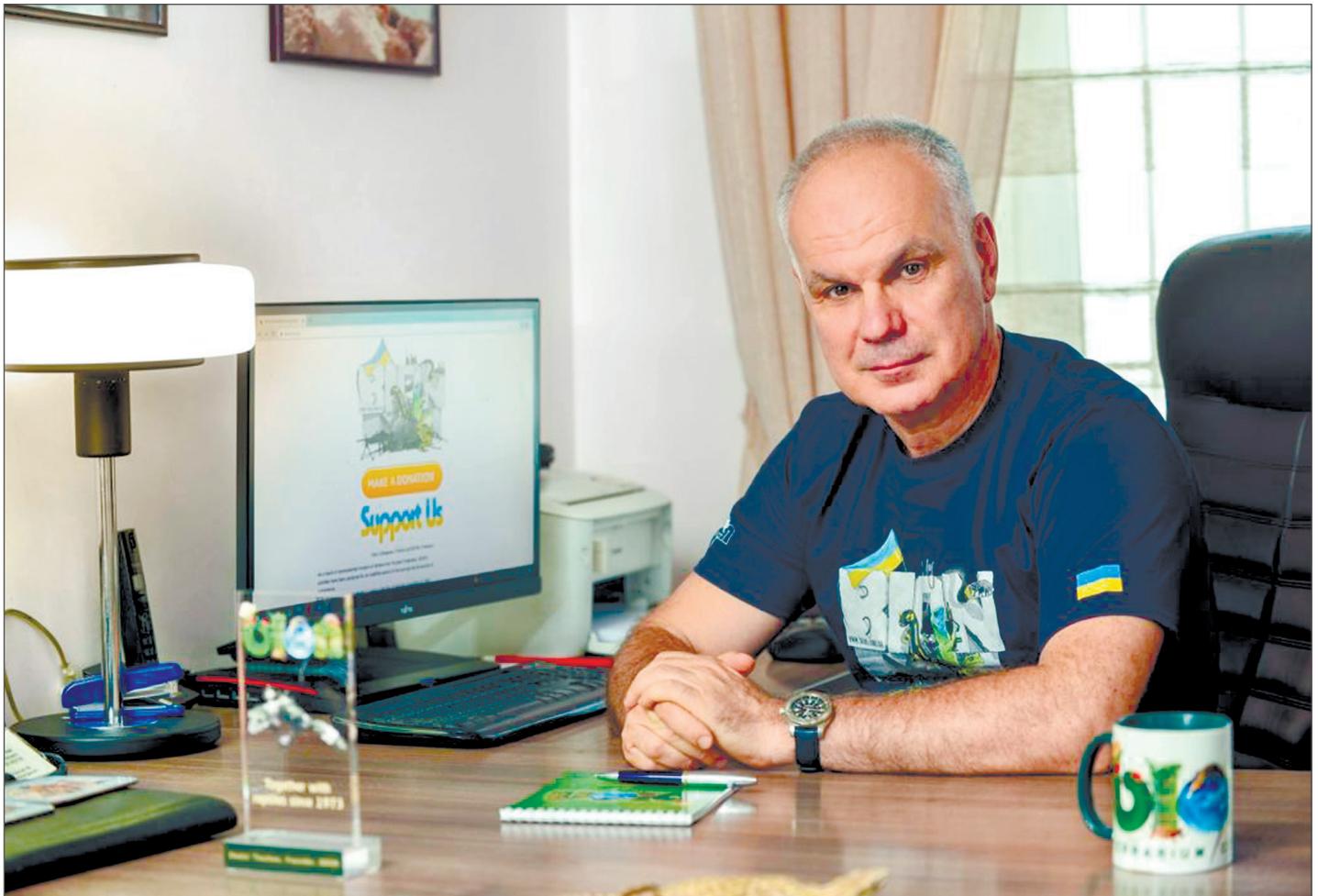




SIMILAR MISSIONS IN HERPETOCULTURE. UNITY IS STRENGTH



Author: **Dmitri Tkachev** – Founder, Responsible Herpetoculture Project (RHP); member, German Society of Herpetology and Herpetoculture (DGHT), member, British Herpetological Society (BHS)

As part of the Responsible Herpetoculture (RH) online project, we share information about various other organizations that support herpetoculture and contribute to its development (see details at SIMILAR MISSIONS – <https://responsibleherpetoculture.com.ua/reference-category/similar-missions/>).

These organizations may have different histories, geography, and specialization but they all work together for the benefit of RH.

Some of these organizations have their own publications, organize conferences and other events, and implement joint projects with various institutions.

In our opinion, this “difference” i.e., the specialization of each of these groups, makes us all stronger, and gives everyone additional advantages and has its own strengths.

The following is a list of just a few of them, in no particular order and without, in any way, diminishing the merits of any other herpetocultural group not listed here.

Mission Statements of “Similar Missions” at Herpetoculture.



1. The United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK) is a science, education and conservation-based advocacy for the responsible private ownership of, and trade in reptiles and amphibians (Fig. 1). We endorse caging standards, sound husbandry, escape prevention protocols, and an integrated approach to vital conservation issues. Our goal is to facilitate cooperation between government agencies, the scientific community, and the private sector in order to produce policy proposals that will effectively address important husbandry and conservation issues. The health of these animals, public safety and maintaining ecological integrity

are our primary concerns.

The existence of the viable captive populations of many species of reptiles and amphibians, regardless of the hands in which they are held, represents an unprecedented and successful model in which private citizens can take an active role in saving species from the threat of extinction. A higher percentage of all reptile species have been bred in captivity than in any other class of vertebrate animals—most of which has occurred in private hands. Today we have the experience and knowledge to maintain every reptile species in captivity, and the American herpetoculture community is successfully maintaining several hundred species of reptiles and amphibians in healthy captive populations. This is one of the greatest triumphs of conservation in the past century, but it is opposed by those who would remove all animals from human hands.

If captive populations of reptiles and amphibians are outlawed and disassembled, that will herald the extinction of many species.

Legislation based on emotion, opinion, philosophy, and poor science is quietly having a potentially catastrophic effect on biodiversity.

<https://usark.org>



Figure 1. USARK logo.



2. The mission of the **Turtle and Tortoise Preservation Group (TTPG)** located in US is to ensure survival of the world's turtles and tortoises through captive breeding. The TTPG supports the private ownership of chelonians and recognizes the substantial role that the private sector has played in the captive breeding and conservation of turtles and tortoises.

The TTPG recognizes that captive breeding reduces the pressure on wild populations and provides assurance colonies for species threatened in the wild due to habitat loss, disease, or natural disasters.

The TTPG has done a remarkable job of coordinating private turtle breeders to create a large number of self-sustaining captive populations of a large number of turtle species,

including threatened ones.

The TTPG Conference is held each November in Mesa, Arizona (on the next one is scheduled on November 16-18, 2022) The TTPG Conference's amazing lineup of speakers includes turtle and tortoise experts from around the world. The conference attracts attendees from all over the United States, Europe, Asia, Canada, and South America. Topics include captive care, nutrition, medical care, captive breeding, incubation tips, raising healthy offspring, enclosure design, and much more. Field trips include visits to private breeding facilities, local zoological institutions, and other interesting experiences, and there are often special evening events addressing conservation concerns, updates on legal issues such as the "under 4 inch regulation" that makes the import and sale of captive bred offspring in the United States unnecessarily complicated, presentations from USARK, Q&A sessions, and of course, lots of fun social time is enjoyed by attendees.

The TTPG is also has an impressive annual color publication *The Batagur* (Fig. 2).

<https://www.ttpg.org/>

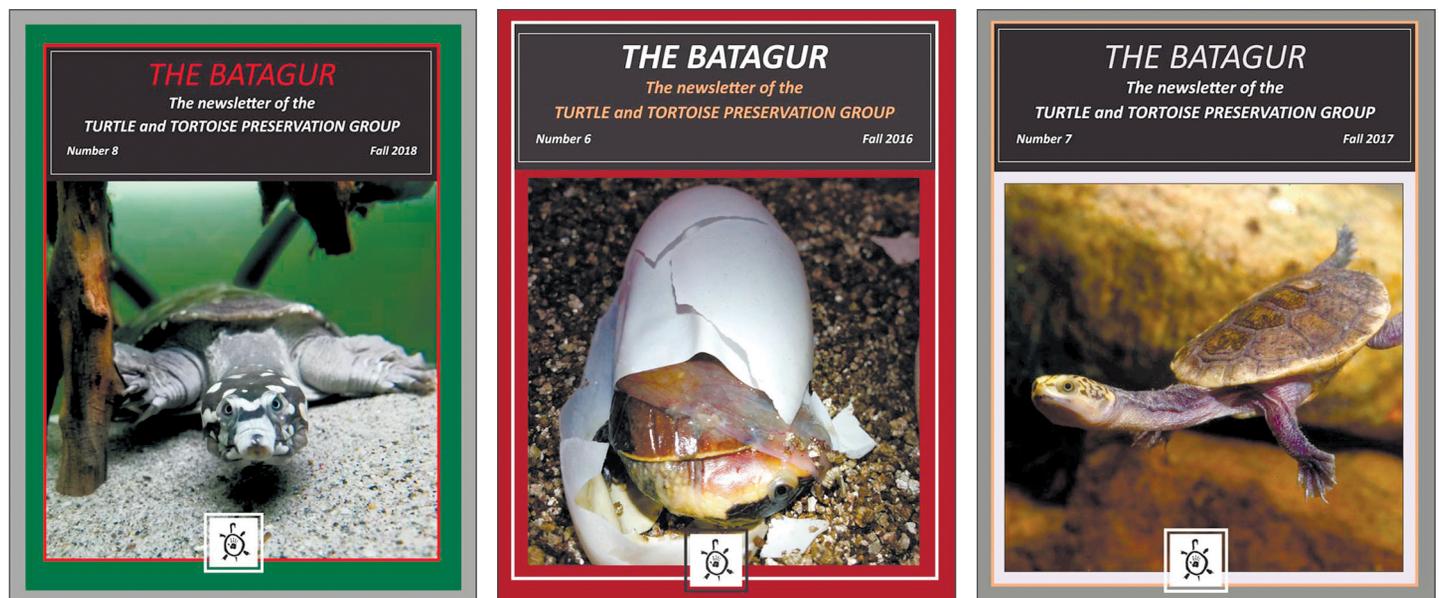


Figure 2. Cover pages of the "Batagur" journal, TTPG.



3. German Society for Herpetology and Herpetoculture (“Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde e.v.”).

The mission of the DGHT is to contribute to both research on amphibians and reptiles and captive keeping and breeding.

DGHT is strongly engaged in herpetological conservation and is accredited by the German Federal Nature Conservation Act. Since the ‘Year of the Frog 2008’, DGHT, in cooperation with the Association of German Zoo Directors (www.zoodirektoren.de), is involved in amphibian ex situ conservation efforts. Their activities especially unit conservation breeding projects run in Austria, Germany and Switzerland and aims at a joint venture of zoos and private keepers.

The conservation of species in captivity: DGHT members participate as both private breeders and zookeepers in the breeding programs of endangered species. DGHT develops guidelines for the proper management of amphibians and reptiles and contributes to identification and handling of these animals. DGHT with VDA offer the opportunity to obtain a certificate of keeper’s competence through examinations provided by DGHT experts. You can take courses and pass an examination on the website (only in German): <https://www.sachkunde-vda-dght.de/>.

Activities in the dissemination of information: DGHT members attach special attention to the exchange of the information between their members and the transmission of the new technical knowledge to the public. To this goal, the DGHT regularly organizes specialized conferences and publishes an extensive portfolio of specialized journals (Fig. 3). Numerous working groups, regional and city groups share experiences and provide information on innovation.

<https://www.dght.de/startseite>

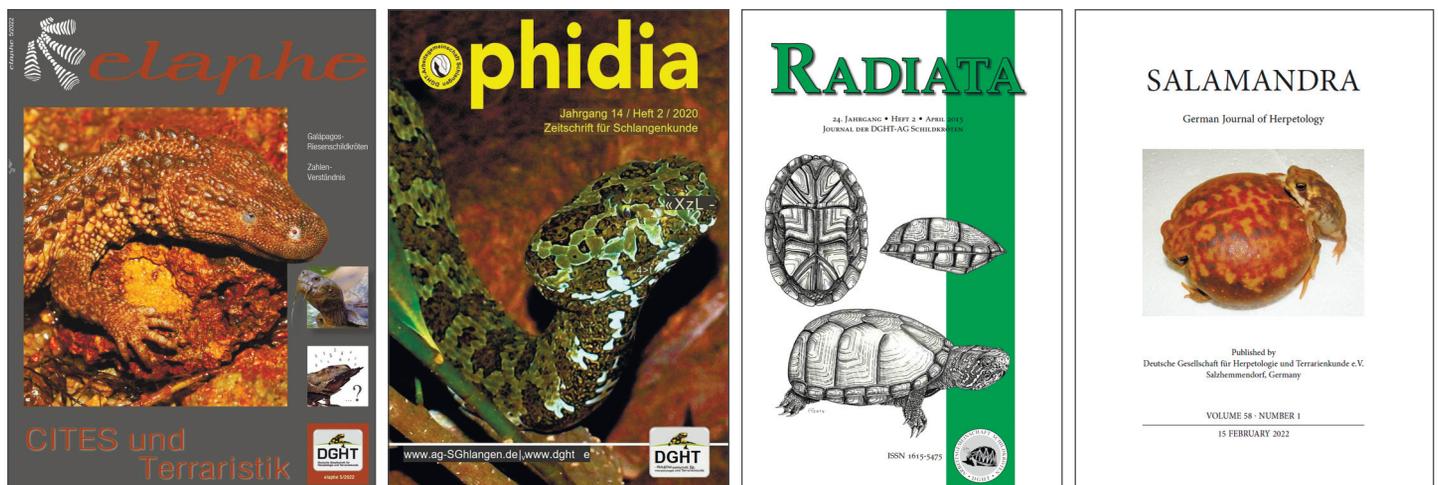


Figure 3. Cover pages of four journals published by DGHT.



4. Established in 1947, the **British Herpetological Society (BHS)** is one of the most prestigious herpetological societies in the world. The society's Herpetological Journal is ranked as one of the leading scientific publications devoted to herpetology.

Through these publications (Fig. 4), specialist committees, and meetings, the society actively supports:

- conservation activities targeted on native British species;
- field studies and conservation management work worldwide;
- scientific research;
- responsible captive breeding and maintenance of reptile and amphibian species;
- exchange of knowledge and expertise between enthusiasts and herpetologists both in the UK and around the world.

The 2023 AHH / BHS Conference on Reptile Husbandry and Breeding is planned to occur on March 18-19, 2023.

<https://www.thebhs.org/>

5. The **Herpetofauna Foundation (HF)**, located in Holland, works hard for the wellbeing and protection of reptiles and amphibians worldwide and does so through various educational programs, fundraisers and charity events. Their tagline is "A warm heart for cold blood!" The HF also aids in funding for scientific research. At the Herpetofauna Foundation they work in a variety of different ways, and they are constantly adapting the methods we use to be as efficient as possible. The main body of the foundation's work is focused on helping conservation organizations and conservation projects by raising as much money as possible to help them achieve their goals. The foundation will also provide a more hands on service providing intellectual input and also field services if needed (where specific authorization is given). All of these projects are financially supported by the foundation and all other involvement will only take place if these projects request our input in other areas (Fig. 5).

(The detailed article about The Herpetological Foundation by Rogier Van Rossem was published in RH Journal; 2#issue April-May 2022, pp.47-50)

<https://herpetofaunafoundation.org/>

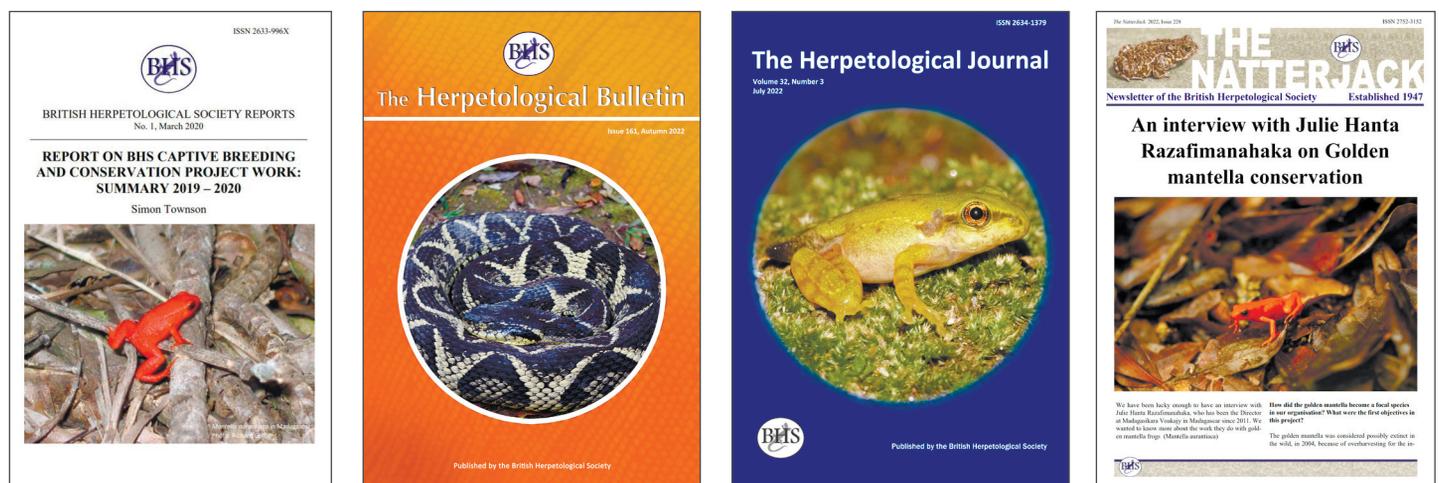


Figure 4. Journals published by BHS.



Figure 5. Group photo from annual “body art for nature” event organized by Herpetofauna Foundation at which body painters create their art for conservation.



6. The Responsible Herpetoculture Project (RHP) is a new international educational/public relation organization that is needed for the:

- creation and management of populations of amphibians and reptiles outside the bounds of their natural habitats in the context of the global destruction of natural ecosystems with the aim of forming a reserve bank of genes in the form of live, breeding animals which are genetically, morphologically, physiologically and behaviorally to the maximum extent possible identical to individuals from specific natural populations with the prospect of their subsequent populations reintroduction;
- advocating for herpetoculture as an integral part of zooculture and as an effective mechanism to combat poaching and smuggling: captive-bred, healthy adopted animals are always better to meet the needs of world’s pet market than wild-caught animals;
- protecting herpetoculture from unsound regulatory and legislative policies. Presenting the positive accomplishments of

herpetoculture to the media;

- creating opportunities for experienced (reputable) breeders to obtain, breed and legally move rare and valuable species within the framework of a controlled program;
- promoting herpetoculture as an important part of ecological education worldwide, RH contribution to the conservation of species in nature;
- collecting, exchanging and analyzing information that is important for breeding and getting healthy multiple generations of amphibians and reptiles.

The RHP is producing the “Responsible Herpetoculture Journal” (Fig. 6) - a professional bimonthly publication on Herpetoculture, with the goal of uniting private breeders, herpetologists, and other experts on conservation and zoo management from different countries.

The RHP is currently working on the global “Save Parsons Chamaeleon” (SPC) project.

The RHP is planning to create a Herpetocultural Assessment Group to create and maintain an assessment protocol to evaluate the self-sustaining status of endangered species in herpetoculture.



Figure 6. The four issues of Responsible Herpetoculture Journal published so far.

The RHP tagline is “Preserving Amphibians and Reptiles in a Changing World!”

<https://responsibleherpetoculture.com.ua/>

Unfortunately, today there is still insufficient cooperation between all of the groups mentioned above, along with other related herpetological/herpetocultural groups.

However, it is hard to overestimate the importance of such partnerships: sharing ideas, plans and specific activities that could bring a synergistic effect! Conferences, joint projects, sharing expertise of partners in responsible herpetoculture could assist these groups obtain additional public weight, feedback and resonance with resource agencies and the public.

For our part, we invite all interested parties to actively cooperate within the RH framework.

Also, I take this opportunity to remind you what RH really is and describe it briefly as outlined in RH Manifesto.

The RHP is the creation and management of populations of amphibians and reptiles by private breeders worldwide in the context of the global destruction of natural ecosystems, with the aim of forming a reserve bank of genes in the form of live, breeding animals which are genetically, morphologically, physiologically and behaviorally identical to individuals from specific natural populations to the maximum extent possible, with the prospect of their subsequent reintroduction”

Responsible Herpetoculture in brief

1. Creating and managing metapopulations of rare and endangered amphibian and reptile species in the context of positioning natural (*in situ*) and reserve (*ex situ*) populations as a single continuum.
2. Maintaining genetic diversity of *ex situ* populations, preventing decrease in the level of heterozygosity of individuals. Controlling reserve and natural populations’ gene pools’ conformity.
3. Ensuring genes flow between *ex situ* ↔ *ex situ* and *ex situ* ↔ *in situ* populations to achieve an optimal diversity in the gene pools.
4. A complete transition to the animals’ identification at the level of population category vs. level of species category.
5. Creating ecologically reasonable methods of keeping animals in reserve populations in order to maintain physiological and behavioral authenticity.
6. Development of veterinary approaches that would ensure the priority of animals’ survival and welfare, primarily at the level of the population, rather than at the level of an individual, and over long times.
7. Responsible approach to maintaining the stability of natural populations, carrying out scientific and educational work aimed at eliminating threats and restoring the number of animals in the wild.

8. Forming algorithms that facilitate the joint efforts of all interested individuals (including private specialists), organizations and the public around the issue of preserving specific animal populations.
9. Informing the public about the situation in natural and reserve populations, about the work carried out to prevent species' extinction in order to mobilize social interest and political will.
10. Developing tools and methods to actively engage society in environmental activities, to consciously modify everyday life in the context of harmonious coexistence with nature.
11. Developing methods for reliable, long-term financing of conservation projects with a focus on effective market mechanisms.
12. Carrying out initiatives aimed at improving the social status of people and organizations involved in *ex situ* populations maintaining and creation as part of zooculture projects and activities, as those carrying out a particularly important mission to preserve the biodiversity.

Informing and interacting with the public, is

of course, the most important, and possibly key objective of the Responsible Herpetoculture Project.

People brought up on an edited idea of reality are not able to sensibly judge the solutions for the problems caused by human activities in nature; they become puppets of the media, which, in turn, serves the interests of governments and corporations.

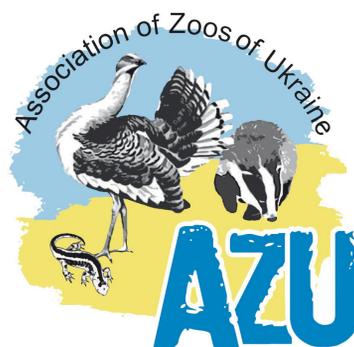
It would be naive to believe that the Responsible Herpetoculture can be limited only to specific issues related to keeping and breeding of reptiles and amphibians in captivity. This topic is much wider.

The formation of the ecological culture of human society is an essential part of the process that arouses desire in people to save species and maintain healthy ecosystems.

Herpetoculture suffers from a lack of positive public relations. This is an opportunity for all of us to step up and address this most important issue. Contributing, compiling and analyzing data and information, and publicizing in a unified front through Responsible Herpetoculture can help us achieve this important goal.

REFERENCES

- De Vosjoli, P. 2022. Biodiversity delusion and inbreeding depression in herpetoculture. *Responsible Herpetoculture Journal*, 1: 26-29.
- Van Rossem, R. 2022. The Herpetofauna Foundation. *Responsible Herpetoculture Journal*, 2: 47-50.
- Tkachev, D., Prokopiev, S. 2022. Responsible Herpetoculture – basic principles. *Responsible Herpetoculture Journal*, 1: 3-24.
- Evaluation of the Captive Breeding Potential of Selected Amphibian and Reptile Taxa Included in Appendices I and II at CITES CoP18 Evaluation of the Captive Breeding Potential of Selected Amphibian and Reptile Taxa Included in Appendices I and II at CITES CoP18 Results of the identical F+E-project (FKZ: 3520 53 2054). 2022. Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), Bonn, Germany.





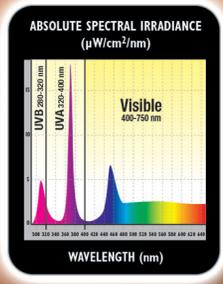
NEW CUTTING EDGE UVB LED TECHNOLOGY



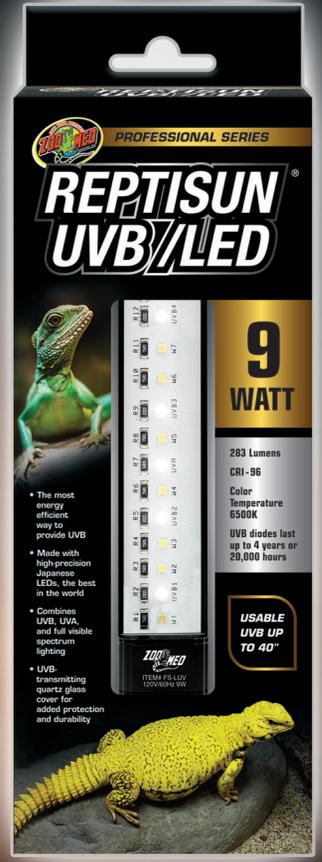
8x 6500K white diodes

1 x UVA diode

4 x UVB diodes



283 Lumens
CRI - 96
Color Temperature 6500K



- Made with high-precision Japanese LEDs, the best in the world
- UVB diodes last up to 4 years or 20,000 hours!
- Combines UVB, UVA, and full visible spectrum lighting
- For large habitats

ZOOMED.COM

