



## PRESS RELEASE

### CRITICALLY ENDANGERED TURTLES – FREE TO BE WILD AGAIN

SINGAPORE 18 Jul 2023 – ACRES will be repatriating three turtles on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023, back to the wild – scoring another victory for wildlife against the cruel and wasteful illegal wildlife trade. This ceremony marks 68<sup>th</sup> trafficked wildlife being repatriated to the wild, by ACRES.

In December 2019, ACRES received a critically endangered Malaysian giant turtle (*Orlitia borneensis*) found at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, with red markings on her carapace. Named 'Jasmine' by ACRES, the red markings on her shell suggested that she could be a victim of the illegal wildlife trade, where such turtles are trafficked for consumption or illegal pet trade. She was likely purchased for mercy release. Native to Indonesia and Malaysia, this species was assessed in 2020 to be Critically endangered, due to declining populations. In July 2020, ACRES rescued 'Genie', a giant Asian pond turtle (*Heosemys grandis*) found walking about on Chatsworth Drive. Native to Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, Genie belongs to a species that was up-listed to critically endangered status in 2021, due to declining populations threatened by habitat loss and poaching for food and pet trade. 'Saleen', a Black marsh terrapin (*Siebenrockiella crassicollis*) will be repatriated together with Genie and Jasmine, and will be received from the National Parks Board (NParks), which provided care and rehabilitation for the terrapin since January 2022. Native to many parts of southeast Asia, this species faces declining populations due to threats from habitat loss and illegal wildlife trade. In 2021, this species was uplisted to endangered, from vulnerable status on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

After preliminary veterinary assessments, the ACRES team of caregivers started the rigorous rehabilitation process at our outdoor sanctuary, with the objective of releasing Genie and Jasmine back to the wild in Malaysia. Rehabilitation process included introducing them to the wild diet, dietary and behavioural enrichment programmes to stimulate natural behaviours and keeping human interactions to only when required. The team tirelessly put in the efforts, even though the travel restrictions and Covid-19 situation in 2020 and 2021 dampened any possibilities in repatriating Genie and Jasmine to Malaysia.

ACRES started the repatriation efforts in 2022, and we are grateful for this collaboration with the Department of Wildlife (Perhilitan) and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia, in giving Genie and Jasmine, a second lease at life back in the wild. ACRES Co-CEO Kalai, who manages its wildlife rescue department shared, "*The Covid-19 pandemic drastically affected our promise to the animals. But with continuous support from our donors, volunteers and hard work from the ACRES team, we are still here, still fighting and we are back to fulfilling our promise for the animals*".

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*“We are happy that one of our rescued wildlife, a Black marsh terrapin which we have cared for at the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation, will be repatriated today with the help of ACRES. NParks will continue to work with organisations such as ACRES in our wildlife rescue and rehabilitation efforts, and raise awareness on the illegal wildlife trade to strengthen the protection and conservation of our native biodiversity and ecosystems,”* said Mr Ryan Lee, Group Director, Wildlife Management, National Parks Board.

Today, team ACRES, together with ACRES supporters and NParks bid farewell to Genie, Jasmine and Saleen, to begin their journey back in the wild. They will be handed over to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia, where they will undergo further rehabilitation before being released in an undisclosed forest location. They will also be monitored by Perhilitan to ensure the animals are coping well in the forest. ACRES is grateful to Perhilitan, NParks for their cooperation, and Rainbow Aquarium for their assistance, in making this repatriation a success!

ACRES also thanks the donors, volunteers and supporters for making this work possible for the voiceless. The organisation is holding its 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary fundraising charity gala on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023, to raise funds to support their animal protection programmes, including the 4Rs (rescue, rehabilitation, release and repatriation). Public can support the campaign at [www.giving.sg/acres/freetobewild](http://www.giving.sg/acres/freetobewild)

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## Appendix

### About ACRES

ACRES (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society), is a registered charity and Institution of Public Character (IPC), founded by Singaporeans in 2001. Driven by the concern for animals, ACRES's mission is to create a caring and socially responsible society where animals are treated as sentient beings. Their animal protection programmes are carried out through the following focus areas:

- **Humane Education** sowing seeds of compassion in young minds and hearts
- **Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation** for the wildlife in distress, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- **Tackling the Illegal Wildlife Trade** Investigating and monitoring to end the cruel wildlife trade
- **Promoting Cruelty-free Lifestyle** Empowering individuals to make animal-friendly choices in daily lives
- **Community Outreach** Inspiring action for animals through volunteer programmes and
- **Promoting Coexistence** Instil wildlife etiquette to coexist with Singapore's wildlife, in our City in Nature.

ACRES's Animal Crime Investigation Unit handled 134 number of cases related to keeping or selling of prohibited wildlife between 2020 and 2022, compared to 56 cases as yearly average before 2020.

### Illegal Wildlife Trade and Singapore's laws

Singapore is a signatory to the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna](#) (CITES) and is committed to international efforts to curb illegal wildlife trade. The giant Asian pond turtle (*Heosemys grandis*), Malaysian giant turtle (*Orlitia borneensis*) and Black marsh terrapin (*Siebenrockiella crassicollis*) are all protected under CITES Appendix II, where trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.

Under Singapore's [Endangered Species \(Import & Export\) Act](#), it is an offence if any person is found to be in possession of or selling species listed under CITES Appendix I that have been illegally imported. Penalties for infringing the Act includes fines of up to \$100,000 per specimen (not exceeding a maximum aggregate of \$500,000 or the market value (at the material time of the offence) of, all the specimens of that scheduled species comprised in the offence, whichever is higher) and/or up to 6 years imprisonment. For offences involving the CITES Appendix II or III species, one shall be liable on conviction, to a fine up to \$50,000 per specimen (but not exceeding \$500,000 for, or the market value (at the material time of the offence) of,

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all the specimens of that scheduled species comprised in the offence, whichever is higher) and /or up to 4 years imprisonment.

Members of public are reminded not to keep, sell or buy prohibited wildlife or their parts, and encouraged to report wildlife crimes to either the enforcement agency NParks at <https://form.gov.sg/6103baa00748c90011e3ff48> or at their 24h hotline 1800 476 1600 or ACRES's 24h hotline 97837782/via email at [acrescrime@gmail.com](mailto:acrescrime@gmail.com)

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Photos available at:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yh0vB4p\\_IACyBmzEB0\\_6kbqmQ2pQvAk?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yh0vB4p_IACyBmzEB0_6kbqmQ2pQvAk?usp=share_link)

Event photos will be uploaded to the same drive by 12:30pm.

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