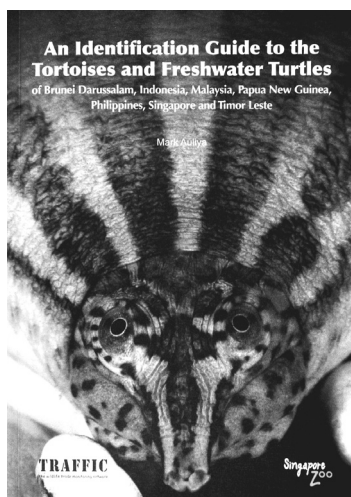


BOOK REVIEW



An Identification Guide to the Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore and Timor Leste. Mark Auliya. December 2007. 98 pp. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. ISBN 978-983-3393-10-7.

This compact (21 x 15 cm) 98 paged guide is lavishly filled with colour

illustrations of all the terrestrial and freshwater chelonians of Southeast Asia (sans mainland Sundaic countries, except Peninsular Malaysia). The taxonomy used is the latest as highlighted by Indraneil Das (IBEC, UNIMAS, Sarawak) in the foreword.

This guide covers a total of 40 species from six families, covering both native and introduced species (of which there are two listed). Each section covering a family is colour coded, and each species is provided with a page of text and a page of photographic illustrations. This guide makes use of different views of an individual animal to highlight the distinguishing characters, as marked within the text and with corresponding figures. The life habits and diet preference of individual species are also listed by colour coded circles.

This publication is not a taxonomical treatment but meant to be used as a quick and easy identification guide to the chelonians commonly encountered in the food and pet trade. Its primary use is for customs and immigration officials for identification purposes, and this guide is available in five languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malay, Chinese, English and Tagalog). There is even a small section on husbandry so that seized animals can be kept alive for impending release or care by the official agency(ies).

The threat levels of the chelonians are also provided in a tabulated format listing both CITES and IUCN status (pp. 6-7). As part of the compilation for this guide, the author also discovered at least two new taxa and notes that the study of diversity of chelonians in the region is still incomplete.

Despite the brevity of this guide, it is a timely publication for conservation work. This is an excellent book, for conservationists, natural historians, herpetologists and the layperson. Kudos to the Singapore Zoo for being a co-sponsor for the publication and an earlier workshop, and support for conservation in the region.

Tan Heok Hui

Department of Biological Sciences,
National University of Singapore,
Kent Ridge 119260, Republic of Singapore