An Identification Guide
to the Tortoises and
Freshwater Turtles of
Brunei Darussalam,
Indonesia, Malaysia,
Papua New Guinea,
Philippines, Singapore
and Timor Leste. Mark
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

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