

Juvenile spiny terrapin at MacRitchie forest

Subject: Spiny terrapin, *Heosemys spinosa* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae).

Subject identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, forest north of MacRitchie Reservoir; 7 May 2014; 1320 hrs.

Habitat: Mature secondary forest adjacent to primary lowland dipterocarp forest. On forest floor among leaf litter.

Observers: Contributor and others.

Observation: A juvenile example of approximately 15 cm in carapace length was observed on the forest floor during an episode of rain. A tick (Ixodoidea), indicated by an arrow in one of the accompanying pictures, was present on its carapace.

Remarks: Juvenile spiny terrapins have each marginal scute on the carapace extended into a long spike. These spikes are believed to serve as a physical defence to discourage ingestion by predators that swallow their prey whole (Bonin et al., 2006: 322; Lim & Das, 1999: 151).

The example featured in the accompanying photographs was so well camouflaged among the leaf litter that it would have been missed by the observers if it had not moved. Therefore, it is possible that the spines on the edges of the carapace also serve to break the outline of the animal, making it more inconspicuous on the forest floor.

References:

- Bonin, F., B. Devaux & A. Dupré, 2006. *Turtles of the World*. English edition. A & C Black Publishers Ltd, London. 416 pp.
Lim B. L. & I. Das, 1999. *Turtles of Borneo and Peninsular Malaysia*. Natural History Publications (Borneo), Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.



Dorsal views of juvenile spiny terrapin camouflaged against the leaf litter of the forest floor at MacRitchie forest. Photographs by Marcus A. H. Chua.

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