

## Asian brown tortoise in Nee Soon swamp-forest

**Subject:** Asian brown tortoise, *Manouria emys* (Reptilia: Testudines: Testudinidae).

**Subject identified by:** Kelvin K. P. Lim.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Nee Soon swamp-forest; 29 January 2014; around 1530 hrs.

**Habitat:** Mature secondary forest.

**Observers:** Karishmaa Pai, with Alan Ziegler, Robert Wasson and others.

**Observation:** An example of about 40 cm carapace length was encountered on the ground along a forest trail (see accompanying pictures).

**Remarks:** The Asian brown tortoise has been recorded from the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve in Singapore, but it is regarded as an alien species because there have not been any known historical records from the country (Anonymous, 1989: 4, as *Geochelone (Testudo) emys*; Yeo & Chia, 2010: 35). Large turtles like this are often deliberately released by people for religious reasons. The present individual appears blackish-brown and is suspected to be of the subspecies *Manouria emys phayrei* which is native to north-eastern India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. *Manouria emys emys*, which range covers the Malay Peninsula, Borneo and Sumatra differs in being medium-brown, and having small and separate pectoral scutes on the plastron. The pectoral scutes on *M. e. phayrei* are large and in contact with each other (Das, 2010: 175). As the underside of the present example was not examined, its subspecific identity could not be verified.

### References:

- Anonymous, 1989. Recent reports. *The Pangolin. A quarterly bulletin on Singapore vertebrates*. Malayan Nature Society (Singapore Branch). 2 (1): 1-5.  
Das, I., 2010. *A Field Guide to the Reptiles of Southeast Asia*. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd. 376 pp.  
Yeo, D. C. J. & C. S. W. Chia, 2010. Introduced species in Singapore: an overview. *COSMOS*. 6 (1): 23-37.



Frontal view (left) and dorsal view (right) of tortoise at Nee Soon swamp-forest. Photographs by Karishmaa Pai

Contributors: Karishmaa **Pai** & Hugh T. W. **Tan**  
Contact address: [tmskrp@nus.edu.sg](mailto:tmskrp@nus.edu.sg) (Pai)