

Carcass of snapping turtle at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Subject: Snapping turtle, *Chelydra* sp. (Reptilia: Testudines: Chelydridae).

Subject identified by: Ivan W. M. Kwan.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve; 30 July 2014 at around 1125 hrs & 31 July 2014 at around 1130 hrs.

Habitat: Mangrove and coastal scrub vegetation, on gravel path close to freshwater ponds.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: The decomposing carcass of a turtle about 45 cm carapace length was first spotted on 30 July 2014 (Fig 1.). The next day, its head, limbs, and tail were found missing (Fig. 2), presumably taken by scavengers.

Remarks: The carapace and several other bones were recovered and will be deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection (ZRC) of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore.

This is the first record of a snapping turtle from northwestern Singapore. An example, identified as *Chelydra serpentina*, was seen and photographed in MacRitchie Reservoir in 2009 (Ng & Lim, 2010). Free-ranging snapping turtles in Singapore are most likely abandoned pets that were illegally imported.

The snapping turtles of the genus *Chelydra* are native to the Americas, with 3 species: *Chelydra serpentina* from North America, *Chelydra rossignonii* from Mexico and northern Central America, and *Chelydra acutirostris* from southern Central America and northwestern South America. The latter two, formerly subspecies of *Chelydra serpentina*, were elevated to species level (Fritz and Havaš, 2007) based on genetic studies by Phillips et al. (1996). It is not known which species of snapping turtle this carcass belongs to.

References:

- Fritz, U. & P. Havaš, 2007. Checklist of chelonians of the world. *Vertebrate Zoology*. 57 (2): 149–368.
- Phillips, C. A., W. W. Dimmick & J. L. Carr, 1996. Conservation genetics of the common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*). *Conservation Biology*. 10 (2): 397–405.
- Ng T. H. & K. K. P. Lim, 2010. Introduced aquatic herpetofauna of Singapore's reservoirs. *COSMOS*. 6 (1): 117–127.



Fig. 1. Ventral view of the turtle carcass as seen on 30 July 2014 at around 1125 hrs. Photograph by Yap Xinli



Fig. 2. By 31 July 2014 at around 1130 hrs, the head, limbs, and tail had disappeared, presumably removed by scavengers. Photograph by Ivan W. M. Kwan

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