

A probable yellow-headed temple terrapin at Venus Drive

Subject: Yellow-headed temple terrapin, *Hieremys annandalii* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae).

Subject identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Upper Thomson, Venus Drive; 18 December 2016; 2019 hrs.

Habitat: Edge of young secondary forest.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: One example, between 30 and 35 cm carapace length, was found on the ground. The accompanying picture shows the dorso-frontal view of the animal in-situ.

Remarks: This specimen is tentatively identified as *Hieremys annandalii* on the basis of its blackish, relatively smooth-edged, rectangular carapace that has squarish vertebral scutes and lacks a dorsal ridge in the adult (see Auliya, 2007: 50). The featured individual seems to be in poor condition. There is an injury on the anterior left side of its carapace, and the skin on the neck seems to be inflamed. It is likely to have been illegally imported and abandoned.

Hieremys annandalii is native to Thailand, Indochina and the northern parts of Peninsular Malaysia (Auliya, 2007: 50). This species gains its name ‘temple terrapin’ from the native custom of Thai people in placing these turtles in Buddhist temples to earn good karma (Ernst & Barbour, 1989: 161). If the identification is correct, this would appear to be the first time *Hieremys annandalii* is reported in Singapore (see Ng & Lim, 2010; Baker & Lim, 2012).



Photograph by Lena S. Y. Chow

References:

- Auliya, M., 2007. *An Identification Guide to the Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore and Timor Leste*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. 99 pp.
- Baker, N. & K. K. P. Lim, 2012. *Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes*. Updated edition. Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. And Nature Society (Singapore). 180 pp.
- Ernst, C. H. & R. W. Barbour, 1989. *Turtles of the World*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D. C. xii + 313 pp.
- Ng T. H. & K. K. P. Lim, 2010. Introduced aquatic herpetofauna of Singapore’s reservoirs. *COSMOS*. 6 (1): 117-127.

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