

Pignose turtle carcass at Marina Barrage

Veronica Foo

veronfoo@yahoo.com

Subject: Pignose turtle, *Carettochelys insculpta* (Reptilia: Testudines: Carettochelyidae).

Subject identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Marina Barrage, rock bund on seaward; 13 November 2020, ca. 1330 hrs.

Habitat: Seashore, on granite rock embankment in urban reclaimed land.

Observer: Veronica Foo.

Observation: A bloated carcass measuring about 1.2 m from snout tip to tail tip was found beached on the rock embankment next to crashing waves. Fishing lines were entangled around the head, snout and mouth. Human anglers in the area, probably intolerant of the sight and stench, used a plank to turn over the turtle and pushed it down the embankment into the sea where it remained floating at the surface.



Lateral view of the turtle carcass exposed on the embankment above the waves. Photograph by Veronica Foo

Remarks: The Fly River turtle or pig-nosed turtle is native to New Guinea and northern Australia, but individuals, assumed to be abandoned pets, have been recorded from Singapore on several occasions in bodies of freshwater (Ng & Lim, 2010; Muhammad Assiddiq, 2015; Kwan, 2015; Baker, 2017). Although the featured sighting appears to be the first recorded from the sea, it is not known if the turtle had died in the sea, or been flushed out of the Marina Reservoir via the Marina Barrage. Nevertheless, it seems to be a very large example, for the species is known to attain a maximum carapace length of 70 cm (Bonin et al., 2006). Despite having paddle-shaped limbs and being totally aquatic, the Fly River turtle is distinguished from marine turtles in having a relatively smooth skin, absence of carapacial scutes, tubular snout and transverse ridges on the dorsal surface of the tail.

References:

- Baker N (2017) A Fly River turtle in MacRitchie Reservoir. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2017: 28.
Bonin F, Devaux B & Dupré A (2006) Turtles of the World. A & C Black, London. 416 pp.
Kwan IWM (2015) Skeletal remains of a pig-nosed turtle in Tampines Quarry. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2015: 95-96.
Muhammad Assiddiq O (2015) A Fly River turtle at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2015: 162.
Ng TH & Lim KKP (2010) Introduced aquatic herpetofauna of Singapore's reservoirs. COSMOS, 6 (1): 117-127.