

Biodiversity Record: Repeat sightings of a giant Asian pond terrapin over a decade

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Subject: Giant Asian pond terrapin, *Heosemys grandis* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae).

Subject identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Windsor Nature Park off Venus Drive; 19 May 2021; 1818 hrs.

Habitat: Young secondary forest.

Observer: Darshan Mehta.

Observation: The subject was noticed in overcast and humid weather. A noise from the side of the trail alerted the observer to its position on the ground behind a tree and partially under a fence. The turtle had a very dark carapace with a distinct crack on the anterior left portion, and unusually baggy skin around its neck (Fig. 1). It had a carapace length of about 45 cm, and the height of the shell was about 25 cm. It kept its eye on the observer but remained still in its position. The turtle briefly withdrew its head once when a jogger ran past.

Remarks: The present record is interesting because this is the third time in over a decade that this particular wild turtle has been photographed in the same general area. This individual is recognisable by a long scar on the anterior left side of the carapace, and the unusually baggy skin on the neck. That the individual was recorded in the same general area for more than 10 years does not prove that its activities were restricted to within the Windsor Nature Park.

About five years ago, this turtle was encountered in the forest off Venus Drive (now within Windsor Nature Park) by Lena Chow on the evening of 18 December 2016 (Fig. 2). Because of its blackish carapace and the limited views of its carapace and head, it was thought to be a yellow-headed temple terrapin (Chow & Lim, 2017, as *Hieremys annandalii*).

Six years earlier, on 13 December 2010, the very same turtle was photographed in the same area by Daniel J. J. Ng. The scar on the carapace and baggy skin around the neck were already obvious (Fig. 3A). The carapace appeared to be brown and paler (Fig. 3B), and a view of the entire carapace indicated that the turtle is a *Heosemys grandis*. The present sighting, which offers a better view of the side of the subject's head (see Fig. 1), also supports this identification.

There are other *Heosemys grandis* individuals in Windsor Nature Park. On 7 August 2014, a large (40 cm) example with a blackish carapace was photographed in a stream off Venus Drive (Law, 2014). Its undamaged carapace and healthy skin around its neck clearly distinguish it from the individual featured here.

In Singapore, *Heosemys grandis* is believed to be an introduced species that seems to be breeding in the wild (Fung & Lim, 2013).

Note: The authors are grateful to Daniel J. J. Ng and Lena S. Y. Chow for sharing their sightings of the turtle and for kindly permitting the publication of their photographs in this article.

Literature cited:

Chow LSY & Lim KKP (2017) A probable yellow-headed temple terrapin at Venus Drive. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*, 2017: 21.

Fung TK & Lim KKP (2013) Giant Asian pond terrapin hatchling at Upper Seletar. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*, 2013: 120.

Law IS (2014) Giant Asian pond terrapin at Venus Drive forest. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*, 2014: 255.



Fig. 1. In situ, fronto-lateral views of the giant Asian pond terrapin on 19 May 2021. A, left side showing a scar on the front left portion; B, right side. (Photographs by: Darshan Mehta).



Fig. 2. In situ, dorso-frontal view of the giant Asian pond terrapin on 18 December 2016. (Photograph by: Lena S. Y. Chow).



Fig. 3. In situ images of the giant Asian pond terrapin recorded on 13 December 2010. A, dorso-frontal view; B, dorsal view of carapace. (Photographs by: Daniel J. J. Ng).