

Biodiversity Record: Turtles observed at Chencharu Woodland

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Subject: Malayan box turtle, *Cuora couro couro* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae); Red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Reptilia: Testudines: Emydidae); Chinese stripe-necked turtle, *Mauremys sinensis* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae); Black marsh turtle, *Siebenrockiella crassicollis* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae).

Subject identified by: Luqmanul Hakim Bin Othman and Chen Xuanhe.

Location and dates: Singapore Island, Lower Seletar Area, Chencharu woodland, Sungei Chik Abu (draining to Lower Seletar Reservoir); April 2023 to August 2024.

Habitat: Freshwater swamp in secondary woodland (Fig. 1), adjacent to an open-country stream (Sungei Chik Abu).

Observers: Luqmanul Hakim Bin Othman and Chen Xuanhe.

Observation: Four species of turtles were recorded from Chencharu woodland. These include four Malayan box turtles, of which a male of 21.2 cm straight carapace length (SCL) was photographed on 4 August 2024 (Fig. 2). Another male of 18.1 cm SCL, with prominent annuli rings on his carapace, was encountered earlier on 10 March 2024 (Fig. 3). A 20.5 cm SCL shell of the red-eared slider was found on 4 August 2024 (Fig. 3). A Chinese stripe-necked turtle was photographed in April 2024 (Luqmanul Hakim & Chen, 2024). Three black marsh turtles, including a juvenile, were recorded, and a male of 18.1 cm SCL was photographed on 23 August 2023 (Fig. 4).

Remarks: Following the recent taxonomic revision of *Cuora amboinensis* species complex by Blanck et al. (2023), the native box turtles of the Malay Peninsula, including Singapore, are regarded as *Cuora couro couro* (Malayan box turtle). *Cuora amboinensis*, the name formerly applied to all Malayan box turtles is now restricted to the native populations in Sulawesi and the Moluccan Islands of Indonesia. It is presumed that Singapore's population of 'Cuora amboinensis' consists of both wild and released animals (Ng & Lim, 2010; Figueroa et al., 2023). It is likely that the Malayan box turtles found at the site are also introduced, as two specimens exhibit rapid growth history based on their annuli rings, implying a captive history (Fig. 5). The three other species of turtle are also considered introduced (Figueroa et al., 2023). Their occurrence in the area is not surprising considering that it used to be farmland (Yeo, 2019).

Literature cited:

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Fig. 1. Swamp at Chencharu woodland where the turtles were found.

Fig. 2. Malayan box turtle, male of 21.2 cm SCL, with lateral (a), dorsal (b) and ventral (c) views.

Fig. 3. Fronto-lateral view of a male Malayan box turtle of 18.1 cm SCL exhibiting prominent annuli rings on his carapacial scutes, implying rapid growth history.

Fig. 4. Fronto-lateral view of black marsh turtle, 18.1 cm SCL.

Fig. 5. Dorsal view of the shell of a red-eared slider, 20.5 cm SCL

(Figs. 1–4 photographed by: Chen Xuanhe. Fig. 5 photographed by: Luqmanul Hakim Bin Othman).