

Biodiversity Record: Malayan box turtle at Lorong Halus

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Recommended citation. Tan JQ (2025) Biodiversity Record: Malayan box turtle at Lorong Halus. Nature in Singapore, 18: e2025071. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2025-0071

Subject: Malayan box turtle, *Cuora couro* (Reptilia: Testudines: Geoemydidae).

Subject identified by: Tan Jian Qing.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Lorong Halus, at former landfill; 19 May 2025; around 1329 hrs.

Habitat: Reclaimed grass field, in fenced area.

Observer: Tan Jian Qing.

Observation: One example of about 15 cm in carapace length, was seen in an open field at the edge of the landfill (Fig. 1). It was crawling towards the interior and stopped briefly when it noticed the observer (Fig. 2). The rear part of its carapace was coated with soil. The turtle then moved among tall grass and disappeared from the observer's view.



Fig. 1. Lateral view of the turtle moving in the field. Note the soil on the rear of the shell. Fig. 2. The turtle stopped briefly in its tracks when it noticed the observer (Photographs: Tan Jian Qing).

Remarks: Although the Malayan box turtle is regarded as a native species in Singapore, it has been acknowledged that part of the population there consists of released imported individuals. The species is regarded as common and widespread on Singapore Island, as well as on the adjacent islands of Ubin, Tekong, Sentosa, and Semakau. It has previously been recorded from the Lorong Halus area at the former Serangoon Sludge Works (Figueroa et al., 2023 as *Cuora amboinensis*).

Despite there being no supporting evidence, the present record is interesting because the soil on the rear of the carapace seems to show that the turtle had been excavating a hole in the ground to deposit its eggs shortly before the observation. This suggests that there could be a nest in the vicinity. Noting that the featured individual may not be native, the limited views available of the subject do not allow it to be identified to the subspecies defined by Blanck et al. (2023).

Literature cited:

- Blanck T, Gaillard D, Protiva T, Wheatley M, Shi H, Liu L, Ray PC & Anders B (2023) A taxonomic hide and seek: Phylogenetic and phylogeographic relationships in Southeast Asian box turtle, *Cuora amboinensis* (Riche in Daudin, 1801). Russian Journal of Herpetology, 30: 1–52.
- Figueroa A, Low MEY & Lim KKP (2023) Singapore's herpetofauna: updated and annotated checklist, history, conservation, and distribution. Zootaxa, 5287: 1–378.