

Biodiversity Record: Asiatic softshell turtle in Pandan River

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Subject: Asiatic softshell turtle, *Amyda cartilaginea* (Reptilia: Testudines: Trionychidae)

Subject identified by: Tan Jian Qing.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Pandan River at Ulu Pandan; 4 April 2026; around 1630 hrs.

Habitat: Freshwater. Concretised canal about 25 m wide in urban parkland.

Observer: Tan Jian Qing.

Observation: A large example of about 80 cm carapace length was spotted resting submerged with its eyes and snout exposed (Figs. 1, 2) at the side of the canal. After around 5 minutes, it briefly explored the surrounding area before diving into the deeper sections of the canal (Fig. 3). The turtle repeated this activity multiple times over the 15-minute period in which it was observed. A video clip of the turtle's activities recorded by the observer can be viewed at https://youtu.be/Ex_JmPq4bG0



Fig. 1. In-situ dorsal view of the softshell turtle resting submerged at the side of the canal. (Photograph by: Tan Jian Qing).



Fig. 2. In-situ dorso-lateral view of the head of the turtle with its eyes and snout raised out of the water. Fig. 3. Dorsal view of the turtle diving after exploring its immediate surroundings and finding nothing of interest. (Photographs by: Tan Jian Qing).

Remarks: Although regarded as a vulnerable species in Singapore (Thomas et al., 2024), *Amyda cartilaginea* is known to be present in the urban waterways of Singapore. At least 15 individuals between 17 and 43 cm carapace length were recently observed in the evenings within an 888 m stretch of a concretised drain in an urban area in the central part of Singapore Island (Chen & Luqmanul, 2025). Compared to the earlier observation, the solitary subject featured here was twice as large and diurnally active. Its apparent good physical condition suggests that it was not likely to be an abandoned animal that was brought there from outside the country. It again shows that this supposedly native turtle can thrive and attain large sizes in urban environments.

Literature cited:

Chen X & Luqmanul HBO (2025) Biodiversity Record: Asiatic softshell turtles in an urbanised habitat. Nature in Singapore, 18: e2025097. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2025-0097

Thomas N, Law IS & Lim KKP (2024) Checklist of reptile species with their category of threat status for Singapore. In: Davison GWH, Gan JWM, Huang D, Hwang WS, Lum SKY & Yeo DCJ (eds.) The Singapore Red Data Book. Red Lists of Singapore Biodiversity. Third edition. National Parks Board, Singapore, pp. 672–674.