

**The turtles of tropical Asia:  
what we know, what we don't know and what we think we know**

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**Introduction**

There are 319 currently recognized turtle species on earth (Rhodin et al., in press), of which 483 are named species and subspecies, and 497 taxa when also including unnamed Evolutionary Significant Units (ESUs). There are currently 10 extinct species and 14 extinct named species and subspecies, leaving 309 extant species, 469 extant named species and subspecies, and 483 extant turtle taxa (species, subspecies, and ESUs). One additional taxon is functionally extinction, represented by a single male.

This presentation deals with new data on the systematics and ecology of Asian turtles from southern and south-eastern Asia. The geographical coverage includes Pakistan, eastwards to the western Indonesian islands (i.e., those on the Sunda Shelf, plus Sulawesi), and the Philippines, in addition to eastern Asia. A number of recently described turtles from the region are now thought to be of hybrid origin.

**Species Catalogue**

**BATAGURIDAE (Asian Pond Turtles)**

These are hardshelled that are primarily aquatic, although a few are terrestrial, showing large scales on their limbs as well as a "high walk", like tortoises. The shell bears scutes and snout lacks the pig-like tubular structure seen in softshell turtles. There is a general tendency towards herbivory, although some are specialised feeders of fish and crustaceans, and a few show enlarged heads and associated jaw muscles for tackling hard-bodied prey such as molluscs. Eggs are hardshelled, elongated, and buried along banks of water bodies.

**River Terrapin**

*Batagur baska* 60 cm

A large turtle from the mouths of rivers, especially flooded mangrove forests of eastern India. Carapace domed, heavily buttressed; long plastron; head small with an upturned snout; forehead covered with small scales; four claws on each forelimb; carapace olive-grey or brown, head similar coloured but lighter on sides, plastron unpatterned yellow.

Natural history: Inhabits portions of rivers under tidal influence and mangrove forests. Diet comprises fruits of *Sonneratia*; leaves, stems, fruits, molluscs, crustaceans and fish. Clutches comprise 19-37 eggs, measuring 68 x 40 mm; incubation period between 61-66 days.

Distribution: Eastern India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Cambodia and Vietnam.

**Painted Terrapin**