

SOME NOTABLE RECORDS OF TESTUDINES FROM THE INDIAN AND BURMESE SUBREGIONS

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ABSTRACT: Observations on 21 species of Testudines from the Indian and Burmese Subregions are discussed, including 11 terrapins, three land tortoises and seven softshells. Major range extensions are documented for *Melanochelys tricarinata* and *M. trijuga*, as well as for *Aspideretes gangeticus*. In other cases, small range extensions and the confirmation of overlooked records are documented and clarified. Systematic and up-to-date information on geographic distributions of Testudines in this area are very scant, and the records presented here help to fill in many zoogeographical and biological gaps.

KEY WORDS: Testudines, Distribution, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in non-marine Testudines in India re-surgéd rapidly in the 1980s with a series of surveys carried out by E. O. Moll and collaborators; numerous publications resulted from these studies (e.g., Moll and Vijaya, 1986; Moll, 1987a; b). Further field work on Indian turtles and tortoises was carried out in northern, western and southern India, as well as briefly in Pakistan and Myanmar, from June 1986 to September 1987 by JGF. Popular accounts were published (Frazier, 1987a; 1988; 1989a; b; c; d; e; 1990), and an interim report on the findings (Frazier, 1987b) was circulated to various colleagues, and some generalities based on this information were reported in subsequent publications (Stubbs, 1989; Swingland and Klemens, 1989; Das, 1991). From January to July 1988 ID carried out surveys in north-east and southern India and from December 1988 to February 1989 in Bangladesh, and reports on some of these findings have been published (Das, 1989a; b; 1990a; b; 1991). From May 1991 to July 1992, a large bi-national project on the freshwater turtles and land tortoises of India was conducted, with the field research spear-headed by S. Bhupathy, and guidance provided by B. C. Choudhury and E. O. Moll; reports of these findings are now being distributed (Bhupathy *et al.*, 1992; Choudhury and Bhupathy, 1992; 1993).

During these studies, specimens have been found well outside the known ranges of the species, or in localities that help to define the geographic distributions of the species. The initial intention of JGF was to produce one comprehensive report, consolidating the many and diverse sources of information; however, this has not proved feasible, and the present report is finally to put on record part of the information from field studies on non-marine Indian Testudines.

In addition to the field data, bibliographic research revealed previously published records that had been overlooked, as well as other information relevant to the species in question. These data are integrated in the present study, together with data from specimens in collections that have been overlooked. For the present work the identities of the animals were determined by using the diagnostic keys in Smith (1931) and Moll (1987a; 1987b); sources of information on geographic ranges are Smith (1931), Das (1985), Iverson (1986; 1992), Moll and Vijaya (1986) and Moll (1987a; 1987b); nomenclature follows Meylan (1987); Iverson (1986; 1992) and Moll (1987a; 1987b).

Each species account includes a brief description of the localities where specimens were found, the specimens examined, and other information