

THE NARROW-HEADED SOFTSHELL TURTLE, *CHITRA INDICA*  
(TESTUDINES : TRIONYCHIDAE), IN PENINSULAR INDIA

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The known geographic range of *Chitra indica* (Gray, 1831) extends from western Pakistan and northern India (Indus and Ganges river drainages) east to Bangladesh and Thailand. The alledged occurrence of *C. indica* in the Irrawaddy River drainage in Burma lacks documentation. Smith (1930 : 4 ; 1931 : 163-164) reports the species in Thailand. Cantor (1847 : 616) records *Gymnopus indicus* (= *Chitra indica*) from Pinang, and Smith (1931 : 164) notes that "Robinson and Kloss obtained a specimen at the foot of Gunong Tahan in the Malay Peninsula." Cantor's Pinang record seems to refer to *Pelochelys bibroni*. The occurrence of *C. indica* in the Malay Peninsula requires verification.

*Chitra indica* is not known to occur in peninsular India. There is an old record of Jerdon (1853 : 464), who mentions a specimen of *Gymnopus indicus* "taken in a net at Mahé on the Malabar Coast, where, however, it is considered rare." In view of the estuarine habit, Jerdon's record (like Cantor's) may also refer to *Pelochelys*, whose estuarine-marine habits are well known. However, neither *Pelochelys bibroni* nor *Chitra indica* have since been noted as occurring, or as of questionable occurrence, along the Malabar Coast (southwestern coast of peninsular India).

Two specimens of *Chitra indica* in the herpetological collection of the Zoological Survey of India have data of collection from peninsular India. The two specimens (ZSI 21539, N=2), in fluid and readily identified as *C. indica*, were originally registered as *Trionyx leithii*. They were obtained by the "Poona and adjoining district survey" by Dr. R. C. Sharma and party on 8 June 1964 from Dhond (about 190 km ESE Bombay) in the state of Maharashtra. The two specimens are of about the same size, both about 175 mm in plastral length, seem to be somewhat discolored (perhaps dried), and are mostly patternless (no evidence of pale neck stripes).

It does seem strange that this large species of trionychid turtle has hitherto remained undetected in peninsular India. The questionable locality suggests some confusion or transcription of data, but the data of collection seem to be reliable. Inquiry of Dr. Sharma, Zoological

Survey of India, indicates no knowledge of error in the data of collection for the two specimens. This note is written to instigate further documentation of *Chitra indica* in peninsular India.

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