

New Record of *Chitra chitra* Nutphand, 1986 in Mae Ping River, Thailand

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Chitra chitra Nutphand, 1986 is a native softshell turtle species in Thailand. It was listed as a Critically Endangered Species by IUCN in 2000. The river systems of Thailand have been classified into six major river drainages; the Salween, Mae Klong, river of southern Peninsula, southeastern part, Chao Phraya and Mae-kong river systems (Vidthayanon et al., 1997). *C. chitra* has not been previously reported from anywhere other than the Mae Klong river system (Nutphand, 1990; Smith, 1931; Thirakhupt and van Dijk, 1994).

The habitat of *C. chitra* in this record was divided into two areas (Fig. 1). The first is the area below Bhumipol Dam. In this area, one live male *C. chitra* was caught by the longline hook, usually used for *Mystus* spp., near the mouth of Mae Ping River at 15°43.020'N 100°08.632'E, Mueang district, Nakhon Sawan Province in June 1998. The hook was attached to its leg. This live specimen was donated to Nakhon Sawan Inland Fisheries Development Center and was later moved to Kanchanaburi Inland Fisheries Development Center, Kanchanaburi Province on April 29, 1999 for the captive breeding program. The shell width, shell length and body weight were 66 cm, 76 cm and 44 kg, respectively.

Other evidence of *C. chitra* in Mae Ping River included four carapaces and one skull from

the survey in November 2001 and in February 2002. All of these were found in the reservoir of upper Bhumipol Dam at different times. The first carapace with the skull (Fig. 2) has been kept by a restaurant owner for more than 10 years. Its carapace width, carapace length, skull width and skull length were 61 cm, 66 cm, 13 cm and 27 cm, respectively. The second carapace (CUMZ (R) 2001.11.27,1) was from a 90 kg *C. chitra* at Ban Pakveak, Sam Ngao District, Tak Province which was captured by a fisherman in 1987. Its carapace width and carapace length were 64 cm and 71 cm respectively. The third specimen (CUMZ(R) 2001.11.27,2) was kept by a villager who bought it for food a few years ago. It was a juvenile with a carapace of 21.1 cm wide and 21.7 cm long. The fourth specimen (CUMZ(R) 2002.2.17,1) was sold to a restaurant owner by a fisherman in 1997 and was reported to have been captured from Mae Toun, Mae Ramat District, Tak Province. It weighed about 11 kg and the carapace width and length were 27.5 cm and 29.1 cm respectively. At present, the last three specimens are deposited at the Chulalongkorn University Museum of Zoology, Bangkok.

Thirakhupt and van Dijk (1994) questioned why *C. chitra* remains restricted to the Mae Klong, apparently unable to reach the nearby and connected Tha Chin and Chao Phraya rivers and this remains a biogeographical mystery. This record may provide the answer, that *C. chitra* did not only inhabit the Mae Klong river system but in Chao Phraya river system as well.

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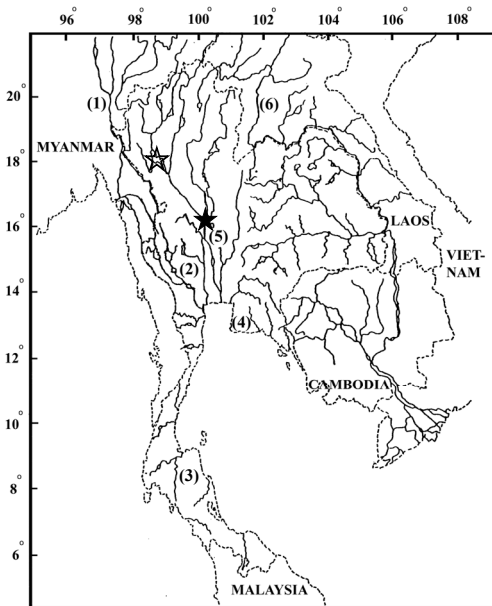


FIGURE 1. Six major river drainages in Thailand; (1) the Salween, (2) Maeklong, (3) river of southern Peninsula, (4) southeastern part, (5) Chao Phraya and (6) Maekong river systems and the new record of *C. chitra* in Mae Ping River, upper Bhumipol Dam (open star) and below Bhumipol Dam (solid star).

This record may be important for the conservation management of this critically endangered species. An intensive survey on its population status and its breeding sites in Mae Ping River is in progress. In addition, the study of other aspects of this species is urgently needed.

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FIGURE 2. Carapace (a) and skull (b) of *C. chitra* in Mae Ping River.

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