

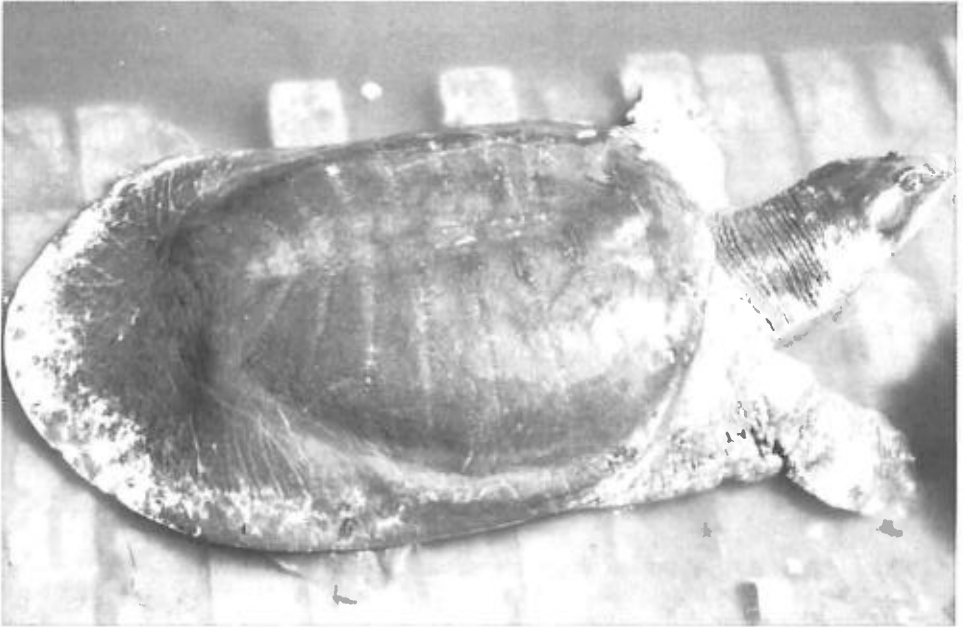
## THE *ASPIDERETES NIGRICANS* MYSTERY

S.M.A. RASHID

*Durrell Institute of Conservation & Ecology,  
Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NX, UK.*

The Bostami or Black-mud Turtle, *Aspideretes nigricans* is known to occur in semi-captive condition at the pond of the shrine of Hazrat Bayazid Bostami in Chittagong, Bangladesh (Smith 1931). Later Khan (1982) mentioned it to be endemic to Bangladesh. During a recent visit to that pond on 23 February 1990, along with Prof Edward Moll, we were able to observe two young, one of which was definitely *Aspideretes hurum*. *A. nigricans* is not only confined to the shrine pond but is also found in the adjacent ditches (Ahsan & Saeed 1989).

As part of my doctoral thesis I am surveying the herpetofauna of Bangladesh, particularly chelonians. During my survey I have collected evidence of the occurrence of *A. hurum* in the Karnaphuli river system (near Chittagong), hitherto unreported. Moreover, *A. hurum* has also been recorded from several parts of Chittagong. As far as the history is known, Bayazid Bostami (whose name has been given to these turtles) once came to Sind to meet his teacher Abu Ali Sindhi, on which occasion he might have visited Chittagong (Huda 1985). If so, he might have brought the turtles here with him, in which case the species might be present in Iran, Sind or some other place from which he collected it. But there is no record of the turtles occurring anywhere except in Chittagong around the Bayazid Bostami pond.



*Aspideretes nigricans*, adult. Bayazid Bostami pond.

It therefore seems quite evident that these turtles might have been collected locally. In this case *Aspideretes hurum* might be the species, which after prolonged confinement in the pond as well as in-breeding has changed slightly into a new sub-species rather than a different species, *nigricans*. Khan (1987) assumed that *A. nigricans* might have evolved from *A. gangeticus*, which does not seem to be the case here. The presence of *A. hurum* young in the pond raises some confusion about the origin of the species *nigricans*. However, further studies on its taxonomy and distribution would shed some light on this mystery.

## REFERENCES

- Ahsan, M.F. & M.A. Saeed. 1989. The Bostami Turtle, *Trionyx nigricans* Anderson : Population Status, Distribution, Historical Background and Length-Weight Relationship. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist.* 86(1): 1-6.
- Huda, S.M. 1985. The saints and shrines of Chittagong. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. 275 + ix pp.
- Khan, M.A.R. 1982. Chelonians of Bangladesh and their conservation. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 79(1): 110-116.
- Khan, M.A.R. 1987. *Bangladesher Banyaprani*. Vol. 1 (in Bangla). Bangla Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh. 168 pp.
- Smith, M.A. 1931. *The Fauna of British India*. Vol. 1. Amphibia and Reptilia. Taylor and Francis, London. 185 pp.

Advertisement

## REPTILES

Proceedings of the 1986 U.K. Herpetological Societies Symposium  
on Captive Breeding

Edited by  
JON COOTE

Published by the British Herpetological Society

## CONTENTS

Care and Breeding of <i>Bombina maxima</i> .....	Bob Bray
Amphibians in Captivity .....	Mike Linley
The Frog Community of Gombak Forest, Malaysia .....	Chris Mattison
A Report on a Reproducible and Sustainable System for the Captive Propagation of the Genus <i>Tiliqua</i> .....	Scott Jones
Captive Care and Breeding of the Leopard Gecko <i>Eublepharis macularius</i> .....	Richard Allen
<i>Lacerta schreiberi</i> in Spain, Portugal and Captivity .....	Steve Norrie and Bert Langerwerf
The Amphibians and Reptiles of Gregory National Park, Northern Territory, Australia .....	Paul Edgar
Rearing Juvenile Spur-Thighed Tortoises <i>Testudo graeca</i> .....	Don Reid
The Pythons of New Guinea .....	Mark O'Shea
An Epidemic Disease of Captive Snakes: A Preliminary Report .....	John Cooper
The Veterinary Aspects of Captive Reptile Husbandry .....	Rob Harper
Environmental Lighting .....	Dave Blatchford

Orders should be addressed to:

The Secretary  
British Herpetological Society  
c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY, U.K.

To Order:

Price: £6.00

Postage and packing is an additional £1.00 worldwide (surface mail)  
or £2.80 (air mail).

International money orders and cheques should be made payable to:  
The British Herpetological Society