

Conserving the Burmese Roofed-terrapin (*Kachuga trivittata*)

Myanmar (2004) – In February and March, scientists carried out field surveys were carried out along two river systems in search of the critically endangered Burmese roofed terrapin (*Kachuga trivittata*). Led by Dr. Gerland Kuchling and WCS Myanmar turtle conservation coordinator, Win Ko Ko, efforts focused on the Dokthawady River system where shells have been recovered and locals report that the species is still present, if not in small numbers. The high density of human settlement along the river, hunting, collection of eggs, and use and impacts upon nesting beaches threaten the survival of the Dokthawady population of terrapins.

A second survey was carried out further north along a 50 kilometer stretch of the Chindwin River, where a second wild population of roofed terrapins is known to persist, and a traditional ban on killing river terrapins by the local Shan people appears to be an important factor in the survival of the turtle.

While no live turtles were observed during the surveys, the field team mapped out plans to develop a research and conservation initiative aimed at protecting wild populations in both river systems while developing a captive breeding and head-start program at Mandalay Zoo.

On the Chindwin River, efforts will focus on reinforcing and promoting the traditional ban on killing adult turtles, while protecting nesting beaches and eggs. On the Dokthawady River, incentives will be provided to encourage fishermen and hunters to turn in any roofed terrapins that they catch rather than kill them. Researchers will examine the home range and ecology of resident turtles using radio telemetry, and investigate the possibility of using the impoundment behind a new dam being constructed on the river as a sanctuary for the species.



A living example of the critically endangered Burmese Roofed-terrapin. This adult was confiscated in April from traders along the Chindwin River in northern Myanmar. The turtle was turned over to the Yadanabon Zoo in Mandalay where a small project is focused on developing the world's only assurance colony for the species.