

A NEW GENUS AND SPECIES OF TURTLE, FROM
NORTH AUSTRALIA.

By ALLAN R. McCULLOCH, Zoologist.

(Plates xxvi-xxvii.)

The Trustees have recently received from Mr. Hugh W. Christie, Lighthouse-keeper at Point Charles, a small turtle 153 mm. long, captured near Port Darwin, North Australia. While entering the family *Cheloniidæ* it is apparently distinct from any of the three genera at present known, and I therefore propose for it the name *Natator*. We know nothing either of its habits or food, and as it is a unique specimen I have been unable to examine its skull.

It is most nearly related to *Chelonia*, and judging by the similar form of its upper jaw, which is not hooked, is doubtless herbivorous. From that genus, however, it is separated by the different arrangement of the shields of the head, and the distinctly paired nuchal. Also the upper shields of both head and body have each a large symmetrical areola placed rather behind their centres.

Eretmochelys is distinguished by its hooked jaws and the two pairs of prefrontal shields, while *Caretta* has five or more pairs of costal shields.

NATATOR,¹ *gen. nov.*

Head and carapace covered with horny shields, each with distinct symmetrical areolæ; nuchal shield divided into two, each half having its own areola; five vertebrals, and four pairs of costals; twelve pairs of marginals. Plastron as in *Chelonia*, with a well developed intergular. Head with a pair of large prefrontals; frontal in contact with the prefrontals and a pair of large supraoculars; parietal shield very large and followed by a single post-parietal; two pairs of temporals. Upper jaw not hooked. Limbs paddle-shaped, with one claw each.

¹*Natator*—a swimmer.

The sides of the carapace, or marginal shields, are reflexed, and though it would seem that this is the natural condition, it is not certain that it has not been caused by lateral pressure in packing during transit.

NATATOR TESSELLATUS, *sp. nov.*

(Plates xxvi.-xxvii.)

Head covered with large symmetrical shields of which the greater portion of each is occupied by a more or less rugose areola. Upper jaw with a small triangular incision at the tip. A pair of large prefrontal shields separated from the maxillary sheath by a small scale. Frontal much smaller than the supraoculars, pentagonal, its anterior edge wedged in between the prefrontals. Parietal very large, connected with and surrounded by the frontal, supraoculars, two pairs of temporals, and a single post-parietal. Two suboculars, and one postocular, between which and the soft skin of the neck are six or seven irregular shields. Mandible strongly hooked.

Carapace rounded, it being only one-ninth longer than broad; unicarinate in the young, and with the sides reflexed (see note above.). Lateral and posterior margins serrated and formed of twenty-six shields. The nuchal is divided in the median line into two distinct shields. All the shields of the carapace have very distinct symmetrical areolæ placed rather behind the centre, which are coarsely pitted; those of the vertebral shields are six or seven sided, while on the costal series they are four, five, or six sided; on the marginals they are quadrangular, the postero-external angle being produced as a spine.

Plastron with a large intergular, and a series of inframarginals. Each shield with a more or less central areola which is smooth and not so well defined as those of the back. Two prominent ridges, commencing on the gular shields, pass backwards and outwards along the line of areolæ, being most widely spaced and strongly developed on the pectoral and abdominal shields, whence they converge again and are lost on the anals. A small triangular shield separates the distal ends of the anals, but it is very soft and imperfect and is possibly lost with age.

The upper surface of the fore-limbs is margined anteriorly with a row of squamiform shields which become larger as they approach the tip. Hinder margin with six shields. The remainder of the upper surface is covered with small, irregular, juxtaposed scales. Lower surfaces similar, but without the scales

on the hinder margin. Hind-limbs short and rounded, otherwise like the fore-limbs.

Colour brownish-olive above, with tortoise-shell markings, the areolæ and margins of the carapace of a lighter shade. Margins of the limbs and the under surfaces yellowish.

Measurements—

Total length	...	...	...	152 mm.
Length of head	...	...	...	34 „
Length of carapace	...	...	...	116 „
Breadth of carapace	...	...	...	104 „
Length of anterior limb	...	...	...	67 „
Length of posterior limb	...	...	...	43 „

My thanks are due to Mr. J. Douglas Ogilby who kindly examined the turtles in the Queensland Museum and otherwise assisted me in the preparation of the above.



McCulloch, Allan R. 1908. "A new genus and species of turtle, from north Australia." *Records of the Australian Museum* 7, 126–128.

<https://doi.org/10.3853/j.0067-1975.7.1908.956>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/33721>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3853/j.0067-1975.7.1908.956>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/17646>

Holding Institution

MBLWHOI Library

Sponsored by

MBLWHOI Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.