

# FIRST RECORD OF *Platemys platycephala melanonota* ERNST, 1984 (REPTILIA, TESTUDINES, CHELIDAE) FOR THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

Telêmaco Jason Mendes-Pinto<sup>1,2</sup>

Sergio Marques de Souza<sup>2</sup>

Richard Carl Vogt<sup>2</sup>

Rafael Bernhard<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

In this short communication we report the first record of *Platemys platycephala melanonota* (Reptilia, Testudines, Chelidae) for Brazil.

**Key words:** *Platemys platycephala melanonota*, distribution, Amazon, Brazil

## RESUMO

**Primeiro registro de *Platemys platycephala melanonota* Ernst 1984 (Reptilia, Testudines, Chelidae) para a Amazônia brasileira.** Nesta nota nós relatamos o primeiro registro de *Platemys platycephala melanonota* (Reptilia, Testudines, Chelidae) para o Brasil.

**Palavras-chave:** *Platemys platycephala melanonota*, distribuição, Amazônia, Brasil

The South American genus *Platemys* is composed by a single species, *Platemys platycephala* (Schneider, 1792). *P. platycephala* is characterized by a small size, not exceeding 17.5 cm in males and 16.7 cm in females, the flat carapace with a vertebral groove accompanied by a distinct keel on each side (Pritchard and Trebbau, 1984; Ernst, 1987; Ernst and Barbour, 1989; Almonacid *et al.*, 2007; Vogt, 2008). The head is orange-brown and chocolate-brown carapace with one lane in each side ranging from dark brown to black. The plastron is dark brown uniform with an orange narrow border (Vogt, 2008).

The species comprises two subspecies: *Platemys platycephala platycephala* (Schneider, 1792) and *Platemys platycephala melanonota* Ernst, 1984 (Turtle

<sup>1</sup> Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Florestais e Ambientais, Universidade Federal do Amazonas - UFAM. E-mail para correspondência: bothrocophias@hotmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Coleção de Anfíbios e Répteis, Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia – INPA.

Taxonomy Working Group, 2007). *Platemys p. melanonota* is a darker subspecies distributed from Peru to Ecuador, while *Platemys p. platycephala* is lighter and occurs in the Guianas, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil and Bolivia (Ernst, 1983; 1987; Pritchard and Trebbau, 1984; Iverson, 1992; Molina *et al.*, 2009; R.C. Vogt, pers. comm.). The two subspecies differ in the amount of shell black pigmentation. *Platemys p. platycephala* has scarce black spotting carapace, the bridge is yellow with a dark bar (about 27% width), has more than four postorbital scales and less than four scales rows between the eye and the eardrum. While *Platemys p. melanonota* has a black carapace, except for the vertebral groove, the dark bar covers more than 90% of the bridge width, and usually has less than four postorbital scales and more than three scales rows between the eye and the ear drum (Almonacid *et al.*, 2007).

Turtles with solitary and nocturnal habits, are typically found in shallow temporary pools formed in rain forest (Almonacid *et al.*, 2007). *Platemys p. melanonota* presents aggressive behavior and their diet consists of fish and a wide variety of aquatic invertebrates (Almonacid *et al.*, 2007). Its color pattern promotes a camouflage with the leaves on the forest floor (Vogt, 2008).

We registered on 17 September 2009 an adult individual of *Platemys p. melanonota* (INPA-H 27680, carapace length 142 mm and plastron length 132 mm; Figure 1). The specimen was collected in an area of slope in upland forest away from water bodies of the Floresta Nacional do Trairão (henceforth FLONA Trairão) during the Rapid Ecological Assessment. The Rapid Ecological Assessment was conducted between 5 and 24 September 2009 (rainy season), as required by Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade (ICMBio) for the management plan of FLONA Trairão. The FLONA Trairão is located in the municipality of Trairão (55°24'14,67''W, 4°34'33,67''S), southwestern state of Pará (Figure 2) and it is a federal conservation unit (257,482 hectares) composed predominantly by tropical rain forest (Costa *et al.*, 2009).

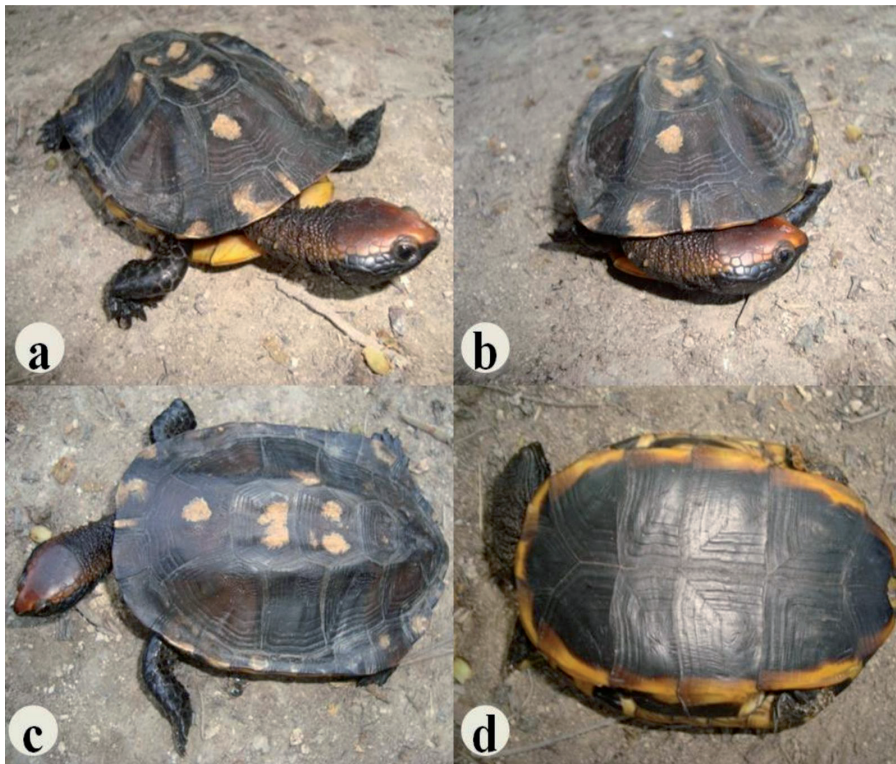


Figure 1. *Platemys platycephala melanonota* (INPA-H 27680) collected in the Floresta Nacional do Trairão, municipality of Trairão, southwestern state of Pará, Brazil. a) dorsolateral view, b) frontal view, c) dorsal view d) ventral view.  
Photo by Telêmaco J. Mendes-Pinto.

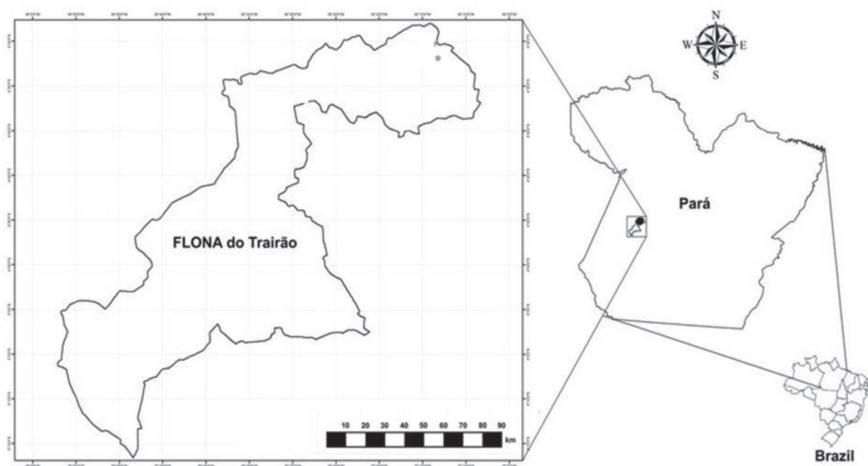


Figure 2. Geographic location of Floresta Nacional do Trairão, in southwest state of Pará, Brazil, where the gray point represents the collection location of the specimen.

*Platemys p. melanonota* is not classified as endangered species under the list of IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN, 2011). According to Almonacid *et al.* (2007), this species is not commonly used for human consumption due to its small size nor prosecuted for the international pet market. So, *P. p. melanonota* has a healthy and dense population in their natural environment. In the southwestern state of Pará large areas of forest were converted into pastures, which prevents the existence of a species inhabiting undisturbed forest habitats (Primack and Rodrigues, 2001), such as *P. p. melanonota*.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Atech Tecnologias Críticas for logistical support during field activities and Daniel Ferreira for preparing the map. Telêmaco J. Mendes-Pinto received the scholarship for the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – CAPES and Sergio M. Souza is a fellow of the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico - CNPq SET-5A for securing human resources in the Amazon. The voucher specimen was collected under license ICMBio / SISBIO 21448-1. An anonymous reviewer provided useful comments and corrections.

## REFERENCES

- ALMONACID, J. V. R. *et al.* 2007. **Las tortugas y los cocodrilianos de los países andinos del tropico**. v. 1. Bogotá, D. C. Colombia: Conservacion Internacional, 467 p.
- COSTA, M. *et al.* 2009. **Relatório de Avaliação Ecológica Rápida: resultados da 1ª campanha do Plano de Manejo da Floresta Nacional do Trairão**. Relatório Técnico, v. I/II. ATECH, 121p.
- ERNST, C. H. 1983. Geographic variation in the Neotropical turtle, *Platemys platycephala*. **Journal of Herpetology**, v. 17, n. 4, p. 345-355.
- ERNST, C. H. 1987. *Platemys, Platemys platycephala*. **Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles**, v. 405, p. 1-4.
- ERNST, C. H.; BARBOUR, R. W. 1989. **Turtles of the world**. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 313 p.
- IUCN, **International Union for Conservation of Nature**. 2011. Red List of Threatened Species. Accessible at: <<http://www.iucnredlist.org>>. Accessed on: 28 May 2011.
- IVERSON, J. B. 1992. **A revised checklist with distribution maps of the turtles of the world**. Richmond, Indiana: Privately Printed, 374 p.
- MOLINA, F. B. M. *et al.* 2009. Reptilia, Testudines, Chelidae, *Platemys platycephala platycephala*: Distribution extension. **Check List**, v. 5, n. 3, p. 714-716.
- PRIMACK, R. B.; RODRIGUES, E. 2001. **Biologia da Conservação**. Londrina: E. Rodrigues, 328p.
- PRITCHARD, P. C. H.; TREBBAU, P. 1984. The turtles of Venezuela. **SSAR Contributions to Herpetology**, v. 2, p. 1-403.
- TURTLE TAXONOMY WORKING GROUP. 2007. An annotated list of modern turtle terminal taxa with comments on areas of taxonomic instability and recent change. **Chelonian Research Monographs**, v. 4, p. 173-199.
- VOGT, R.C. 2008. **Tartarugas da Amazônia**. Lima, Peru: Gráfica Biblos, 104 p.