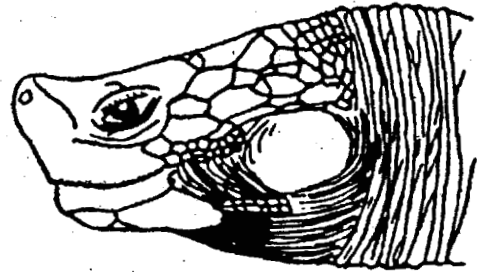


# IUCN/SSC FRESHWATER CHELONIAN GROUP

## NEWSLETTER



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CONSERVATION AND STATUS OF CHELID TURTLES  
FCSG SUB-GROUP REPORT - IUCN/SSC MEETINGS, KUALA LUMPUR

By  
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In conjunction with the preparation of the Red Data Book, and the development of a global conservation strategy for freshwater chelonians, the status of all chelid turtles has been reviewed.

The Western Australian swampturtle, Pseudemydura umbrina possibly the single most endangered freshwater chelonian in the world, though closely monitored and well protected, has failed to make significant population gains. Captive breeding is slow due to low fecundity and delayed maturation, and one of the two wild populations is continuing to decline in numbers. The total world population remains below 100.

As a preliminary step to delineating the status of South American chelid turtles, an extensive taxonomic and distributional review of the group has been undertaken. Previously felt to contain 18 non-endangered taxa, our work indicates the presence of at least 28 taxa, with as many as 11 of those endangered or extremely rare. Many of these new species are currently being described, and should probably be added to the Red Data Book and CITES listings upon publication. A new species of Phrynops from Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil and northern Uruguay is known from less than 20 specimens, none collected within the last 30 years. A new

species of Platemys from southern Bolivia and northern Paraguay, until recently only known from 2 specimens collected over 100 years ago, is currently showing up in small numbers in pet trade shipments from that area, the total number of known specimens now up to 13. A relatively cryptic species of Phrynops from southern Paraguay has also been identified, in this case known from less than 10 museum specimens and one live animal. In addition, several previously described species have had their population status clarified. For example, Phrynops hogeii from the Rio de Janeiro area of Brazil, previously known from only the single type specimen has had its range delineated through museum and field work which has identified an additional 16 specimens, including the first 4 live animals ever known. The population occurs in the Rio Parabia drainage, an area of heavy siltation and habitat destruction where the creation of a natural reserve is unlikely. A program of captive breeding has been recommended. The extremely rare Phrynops dahli from the Sincelejo region of Colombia may be on the verge of extinction due to severe habitat destruction. Live animals have not been observed in the wild for over 20 years and suitable habitat within the species' known range is almost non-existent. An immediate status survey and specific conservation recommendations are desperately needed.

This work has demonstrated that when a poorly-known group of animals is subjected to rigorous taxonomic analysis, the results may demonstrate that several members of that group are in actuality endangered and will require specific conservation efforts.

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