



Photo by John Mackinnon

## Spiny Hill Turtle

(*Heosemys spinosa* Gray)

The Spiny Hill Turtle (*Heosemys spinosa*) is easily recognised by the spiny serration on its carapace margin and pronounced vertebral keel. It is believed that the spines deter enemies (such as snakes and other predators) from swallowing it. But as the turtle grows, the marginal spines disappear leaving serrations confined to the anterior and posterior parts of the carapace and the vertebral keel. The carapace is reddish-brown in juveniles, and brown in adults; the plastron is yellowish-brown, with each plastral scute having dark radiating streaks. Limbs are greyish-brown, usually with a yellow spot behind the eye. The mass of adult species range from 1.5 – 2.0 kg. Adult males possess longer and thicker tails than adult females.

The Spiny Hill Turtle is common in both lowland and hill forests, fondly nesting on wooded areas. They prefer clear rainforest streams at altitudes 170 m up to 100 m where it frequently wanders on land in cool, humid, and shaded areas. It often hides under plant debris or clumps of grass. Young Spiny Hill Turtles may be more terrestrial than adults. The Spiny Hill



Turtle is distributed from southern Myanmar through Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore to the islands of Sumatra, Borneo and the Natunas (in Indonesia), to the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao (in the Philippines).

Orang Asli, the indigenous people of West Malaysia, eat the flesh of this species. The species is endangered because of deforestation and its being collected as a pet.

**Status:** Highly threatened

– The Research Branch, ARCBC

