

Chapter 1



Introduction

The Siamese Narrow-headed Softshell turtle, Chitra chitra Nutphand, 1986 is one of the five native softshell turtles in Thailand. Its numbers have decreased rapidly in recent decades. In the year 2000, The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) listed C. chitra as a Critically Endangered Species (CR) (Hilton-Taylor, 2000). The main causes of its endangerment may be mainly related to the construction of the Vajiralongkorn, Srinagarind and Mae Klong Dams that changed the environment of the Kvae Noi, Kvae Yai and Mae Klong Rivers, respectively, and to its exploitation for food consumption and the pet trade. This critically endangered species has been protected under the Wild Animals Reservation and Protection Act B.E. 2535 (WARPA) but it was not protected by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 1998 (CITES). To date, knowledge of its biology and ecology is very incomplete. Therefore, the focus of this study is to collect data concerning the natural history of wild C. chitra and to study its biology in captivity. Knowledge gained in this study will provide useful information which can be applied toward the successful captive breeding, hatchlings rearing, reintroduction, reestablishment and long term conservation of this species in Thailand.

Objectives

1. To study the natural history of C. chitra including; skeletal morphology, distribution range, population status, habitat characteristics, breeding season and nesting site characteristics.

2. To study the breeding biology of C. chitra in captivity including; mating and egg-laying activities, clutch size, egg size, incubation time, hatching success and growth and survival rate of hatchlings

Anticipated benefit

The knowledge of the natural history and biology of C. chitra can provide useful information for the conservation and management of this critically endangered species in the future.