

THE OSTEOLOGY OF THE NEW GUINEA TURTLE

(*CARETTOCHELYS INSCULPTA*, *Ramsay*).

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(Plates xxiv.-xxvii., and figs. 30-32).

Since first described by Dr. E. P. Ramsay in 1886,¹ the New Guinea turtle, *Carettochelys insculpta*, has excited considerable interest and provoked much speculation as to its systematic position.

Hitherto the species, which as far as ascertained is the sole living representative of the genus and family, was known only from the type and two imperfect skulls; the latter described by Dr. G. A. Boulenger as ornaments or charms attached to a dancing stick, from the Fly River, British New Guinea.²

In the account of the original specimen no mention is made of the manner in which it was procured. As the history of such an example will be of interest, I venture to publish the following particulars from information kindly supplied by Mr. Walter W. Froggatt, F.L.S., Government Entomologist for New South Wales:—

“The fresh-water turtle described by Ramsay was one of two specimens obtained in the Strickland River (the upper right hand branch of the Fly River), in the Geographical Society of Australasia's Expedition to New Guinea in 1885. Captain Hy. C. Everill was in charge, and I was Entomologist and Assistant Zoologist, etc. There were large sand banks all along, but we saw no signs of these turtles in the lower parts of the river. Six of us took the whale boat up the last hundred miles after the ‘Bonito’ stuck in the gravel, and as we towed the boat along the two turtles ran off the sand banks into shallow water and were caught. We ate the contents of both: a large number of eggs were found inside them. It was evidently breeding time as some of the sand banks were covered with their tracks: though we hunted round at several camps we could not find any buried eggs. This was about the middle of October, 1885. Jas. H. Shaw and I caught the type one evening, and I skinned and cleaned it.”

¹ Ramsay—Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. Wales. (2), i., 1886, pp. 158-162, pls. iii.-vi.

² Boulenger—Proc. Zool. Soc., 1898, p. 851.