



Graz, November 2023

New Species Discovered:

***Cuora praschagi* Unveiled in Groundbreaking Scientific Research**

Graz, Austria: In a significant milestone for biodiversity and conservation, a team of esteemed scientists has officially identified and described two new species and one new subspecies of Southeast Asian Box Turtles, one of them named *Cuora praschagi*, following groundbreaking research published at 15th November 2023 in the Russian Journal of Herpetology.

Together with apes Turtles are the most endangered group of vertebrates and the genus of Asian Box Turtles "*Cuora*" is one of the two most critically endangered genera of all turtles.

The study, titled "A Taxonomic Hide and Seek: Phylogenetic and Phylogeographic Relationships in the Southeast Asian Box Turtle, *Cuora amboinensis* (Riche in Daudin, 1801)" delves into the meticulous examination and documentation of the three newly discovered taxa. The research was led by renowned experts in herpetology and dedicated researchers.

Cuora praschagi, named in honor of the distinguished herpetologist Dr. Peter Praschag (founder and owner of Turtle Island, the largest and most diverse turtle collection on earth), is a freshwater turtle species found in the northeastern states of India along the upper valley of the Brahmaputra River. The discovery sheds light on the rich biodiversity of the area and underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to document and conserve Earth's diverse ecosystems.

Key findings of the research include details about the turtle's morphology, genetics, and habitat preferences. The scientists employed state-of-the-art techniques and methodologies to ensure the accuracy and reliability of their findings, contributing valuable insights to the field of herpetology.

"We are thrilled to announce the identification of *Cuora philippinensis* sp. nov., *Cuora praschagi* sp. nov. and *Cuora aboinensis aurantiae* ssp. nov., previously unknown to science. This discovery not only expands our understanding of biodiversity but also emphasizes the need for concerted conservation efforts to protect these unique and often vulnerable species," said Torsten Blanck, lead researcher on the project.



A sound taxonomy and therefore better understanding of evolutionary significant units (ESUs) is the base of every conservation effort. The new species' habitat faces various threats, including habitat loss, pollution, and illegal wildlife trade. Conservationists are now urging increased attention and resources to safeguard the habitats critical to Asian Box Turtles' survival and the preservation of the broader ecosystem.

This groundbreaking research adds to the growing body of scientific knowledge and underscores the vital role that biodiversity plays in maintaining ecological balance. The discovery of the new species serves as a testament to the importance of continued exploration and research to uncover and protect the countless undiscovered species that share our planet.

Peter Praschag, namesake of one of the new turtle species, expresses his gratitude for this appreciation: "For more than 40 years, I have dedicated my life and work to the protection of endangered turtle species. I am delighted that there is now a turtle species that bears my name. And such an extraordinary and beautiful species as that. The first specimen I found in 1998, when Assam, the northeast of India opened for tourism and foreigners could enter the region which was closed for decades. Beside the first ever discovered Black Softshell Turtles in the wild and the study of the enigmatic Assamese Roofed Turtle, I saw my first Assam Box Turtle, a beautiful adult female. I was stunned by the striking color and immediately realized the uniqueness of the turtle I had in my hands."

To get access to the full scientific article detailing the discovery of *Cuora praschagi*, please visit <http://rjh.folium.ru/index.php/rjh/article/view/1979>

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