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THE LEATHERBACK AND THE OLIVE RIDLEY IN SABAH WATERS**G.S. de Silva****ABSTRACT**

According to available records, only two species of marine turtles *Chelonia* and *Eretmochelys* had been observed or recorded by colonial administrators or research workers in Sabah territorial waters. This paper records the circumstances and the first sighting in 1977 of the Leatherback, and the discovery of a decomposed carcase of the same species in 1982. For the first time, the nesting of a gravid Olive ridley is reported on Pulau Selingaan.

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by

G.S. de Silva*

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According to available records, only two species of marine turtles *Chelonia* and *Eretmochelys* had been observed or recorded by colonial administrators or research workers in Sabah territorial waters. This paper records the circumstances and the first sighting in 1977 of the Leatherback, and the discovery of a decomposed carcass of the same species in 1982. For the first time, the nesting of a gravid Olive ridley is reported on Pulau Selingaan.

INTRODUCTION

As far as research workers and others were concerned, only 2 species of marine turtles (*Chelonia* and *Eretmochelys*) were known to occur in Sabah waters, but during a wildlife survey in August 1969, when the writer was investigating the occurrence of turtles on Banggi Island, the inhabitants of the Bajau Kampong of Karakit reported that 3 species of turtles visited Pulau Patanunan during October to November in each year. One was known locally as "TOHONGAN" (Hawksbill), the other "PENYU" (Green Turtle), and the third "PENYU BULU" (species unidentified). It was described as a reddish (?) medium sized turtle. According to Ketua Kampong Magimpat bin Kuyanga (p.c. 1969) of Kg. Minyak, Kudat District, 3 species i.e. (1) "SISIK PANGAL" (Hawksbill), (2) "TIMBAU" (Green) and (3) "MORONG" (species unidentified) visited Koromkinjaan beach in small numbers towards the latter half of December and up to February. He also said that "MORONG" eggs were larger than "TIMBAU" (Green Turtle) eggs. While at Kampong Sikqati, Kudat District, the writer was again informed of the occurrence of these species of turtles, the Rungus name "Raja Kaya" was used in reference to the unidentified turtle. Investigations were extremely difficult as the turtle only nested during the north east moonsoon when travel is difficult (de Silva, 1969).

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