

A FRESH-WATER TURTLE (*Pelochelys cantoris*, Gray,)
FROM NEW GUINEA.

By EDGAR R. WAITE, F.L.S., Zoologist.

(Fig. 4.)

By the kindness and forethought of the Hon. Anthony Musgrave, C.M.G., Government Secretary of British New Guinea, our knowledge of the distribution of the fresh-water turtles (Trionychoidea) has been considerably extended. This gentleman forwarded to the Trustees a large example accompanied by the following particulars:—"The fresh-water Tortoise was brought to the camp of a road-making party, on the third of September, by some natives, who had speared it in the Laloki River, one of the outfalls of the Astrolabe Range, forty miles from its entry into Redscar Bay. I reached the camp myself late on the following day and was shown the tortoise alive and active, in the small pool of a creek flowing into the above river. It seemed to me of interest to science, and I proposed to send it alive to Sydney and had it brought to Port Moresby, but it died on the tenth September of wounds, the carapace showing three or four punctures with a hunting spear. Mr. A. C. English kindly preserved the skin. The tortoise being a gravid female, I superintended the preservation of all the contents of the ovary. All the fleshy parts of the body were readily received by the natives for food. I may mention that Mr. John MacDonald, Head Gaoler for British New Guinea, first drew my attention to the tortoise. It seems to be little known to the natives, or it may be that they seldom attain such large size, as the river whence it was taken is frequented also by a large-sized species of crocodile."

When received at the Museum it was seen that, though the external parts were in good condition, the cervical, pelvic, caudal and limb bones had been removed; the skull had fortunately been preserved. I am thus definitely able to identify the turtle as of the genus Pelochelys, Gray,¹ and I do not see sufficient grounds for regarding it as distinct from the only admitted species, P. cantoris, Gray. It is recorded from India, Burma, Malaysia, Borneo, the Philippines and South-east China (P. poliakowii, Strauch²), and, as before mentioned, it is now added to the fauna of New Guinea.

¹ Gray—Proc. Zool. Soc., 1864, p. 89.

² Strauch—Mém. Acad. Imp. Sci. St. Pétersb., (7), xxxviii., 1890, p. 118, pl. iv., figs. 1-3.