



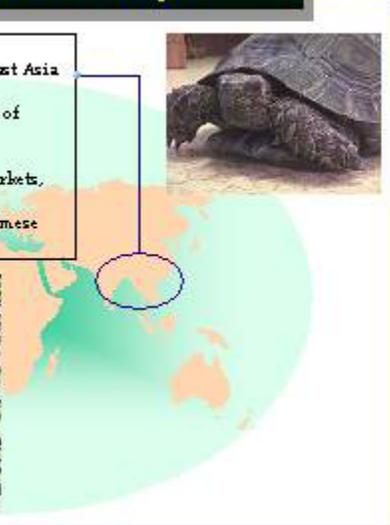
The Burmese Mountain Tortoise is generally considered the fourth largest land tortoise in the world. It is second in size only to *Geochelone sulcata* (African Spurred Tortoise) among the mainland tortoises, reaching maximum weights of close to 100 lbs. The *phayerei* subspecies is generally considered to be the larger, with *emys emys* usually only reaching ½ the size of their relatives. The *emys* subspecies is also called the Burmese Brown Tortoise while the *phayerei* is called the Black. Both have also been called the six-footed (legged) tortoise due to the very large and pointed tubercular scales on the rear thighs.

Over the last few years as keeper skill has increased there has been an explosion of captive bred emys. A large number of these are available from a variety of sources. I'd encourage anyone/everyone interested in this species who is starting out to buy captive bred animals. Wild caught emys are not much fun, even for those experienced with them. (see medical section below)

In the wild, Burms are found in Assam, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Borneo. They prefer moderate (as opposed to desert) temperatures of 55F to 85F and relatively high humidity between 60% to 100%. Yearlings should not be allowed to reach temps below 65F or so. Despite the high humidity requirement, airflow is a requirement so a closed or stagnant air cage is not recommended. Hiding spots are preferred, as are rains or mists which will

### Burmese Brown Tortoise - *Manouria emys*

- **Location** - Southeast Asia, India to Borneo
- **Habitat** - moist, broadleaf forests of Southeast Asia
- **Size** - 60 cm (24 inches)
- **Diet** - dark leafy greens, fruits, small amount of protein via carrion and invertebrates
- **Conservation Status** - CITES Appendix II
- **Threats** - habitat destruction, Asian food markets, pet trade
- **Alternate Names** - Asian Forest Tortoise, Burmese Mountain Tortoise



usually stimulate a feeding response. Burms are crepuscular, usually active in the morning and evening, but can be found basking or wandering about during a cool day.

#### Diet:

Diet is very widely varied, consisting of minimal grasses but lots of clover, plantain, dandelions and other broadleaf weeds. Vegetables, including greens, cactus, cauliflower, yams and squashes are preferred, but fruits and worms are also readily consumed. Protein intake is higher than most grazing herbivores such as *Geochelone pardalis* (Leopard Tortoises) or *G. sulcata*, but this is to be expected given the availability of invertebrates and carrion in their natural environment. Calcium can be sprinkled on all foods. It is suggested that one use calcium supplemented with vitamin D3 if the animal is being maintained indoors and calcium without D3 if it is outdoors.

Youngsters are often very shy, emerging from hiding only to eat, but as they grow (and they grow very quickly) larger specimens show a great deal of curiosity and will often approach to see what you are doing in their yard. If no food is offered, they may well try a tentative bite or nip to see if a finger or toe is tasty. Watch out, they can bite very hard!

### **Medical Issues With Wild Caught *M. emys* .**

Wild caught *emys* are not much fun, even for those experienced with them. While not as difficult as their congeners, *Manouria impressa*, they are still extremely problematic bringing around to captive conditions. One of the authors has worked on a number of these both through the Turtle Survival Alliance as well as privately. While each case has been unique, the following commonalities prevailed.

- Inappetance. When a *M. emys* will not eat, it is having medical issues. They are ravenous feeders once they are over the medical hump, very ravenous! They will eagerly take most foods offered when they are healthy.
- GI stasis. Almost all of the cases of recent imports seen have had GI stasis. Getting the GI tract functioning is a TOP priority second only to getting these animals completely hydrated again.
- Hydration, hydration, hydration. In our opinion it is 90% of reptile medicine. Cloacal fluids, oral fluids, SQ fluids all may be needed. Most of these animals have been dehydrated for long periods of time during their holding/shipment and it takes a lot of time and effort to get them back to a "normal state" metabolically. Until they are stable metabolically, nothing else will work properly (such as dewormers, antibiotics, antifungals...).
- Deworming. *M. emys* need it but they need to be stabilized first. GI blockages from large parasite loads are common, so your vet needs to take things slow and easy with them.
- Pharyngostomy tubes. Can be very helpful in saving this very difficult to treat species. A very effective tool and much easier than repeatedly tube feeding this species.
- Patience. It tends to take me 2-3 months to turn these animals around to a healthy state. There is no miracle cure, 2-3 months is a minimum.

### **Conclusion:**

*M. emys* can be considered the stereotypical tortoise in that they are very slow and deliberate in all their movements, the shell is not attractively patterned and they don't dig long burrows, but they are a very fascinating and personable tortoise, if you have the room for them. They are also considered the most ancient genotype of tortoise still living, so in a Burm, you really do have a prehistoric animal.

It should be noted that turtle and tortoise care research is ongoing. As new information becomes available we share this on the World Chelonian Trust web site at [www.chelonia.org](http://www.chelonia.org). Serious keepers find it to be a benefit to have the support of others who keep these species. Care is discussed in our free online email community, which may be joined from the web address above. Please contact us about the many benefits of becoming a member of the World Chelonian Trust.

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