

## CC NOTAE #2

‘REDISCOVERY’ OF THE TYPE SERIES OF  
*ELSEYA CAELATUS BERAU* (TESTUDINES: CHELIDAE) -  
 REGISTRATION AND CURRENT IMAGES

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**ABSTRACT.** – *Eleya caelatus berau* was described by Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2023) as a localized chelid snapping turtles subspecies confined to the southern coastal Vogelkop Pensinsula, New Guinea along the freshwater drainages of the northeastern Berau Gulf. Though known for several decades, formal description was eventually hampered by the conclusion that the type series was destroyed during the failure of a preservation system; consequently the taxon was described under article 73.1.4 of the ICZN code permitting the use of digital images in select circumstances. Here we report on the fortunate ‘rediscovery’ of the type series, which have now been accessioned in the Yale Peabody Museum. Considered potentially extinct at the time of description, we remain unaware of any additional specimens since 1994. Museum registration numbers of the holotype and paratype, as well as images of their current condition upon relocation are presented.

Keywords: *Eleya caelatus berau*, rediscovered holotype; chelids; New Guinea; type series.



*Eleya caelatus* Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2019) is a relatively newly described species of chelid snapping turtle that is endemic to the Vogelkop Pensinsula of western New Guinea and most of its large western offshore islands. In addition to the nominate form, and one further population that remains undescribed (in prep.), two other subspecies are formally recognized, namely *E. c. ayamaru* Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2019) and *E. c. berau* Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2023). The latter was recognized on the basis of a unique combination of shell characters as well as color patterns of hatchlings and described with a localized geographical distribution along the northern Berau Gulf coastal freshwater drainages (southern Vogelkop Peninsula).

Though known for some three decades, the formal diagnosis of it was eventually hampered by the conclusion that the type series (male holotype; female paratype) was unfortunately destroyed during the malfunction of the preservation system that had housed it; consequently the novel taxon was performed described under the provisions of Article 73.1.4 of the ICZN Code which can accommodate type designations through imagery in select circumstances when the types are lost or destroyed. Fortunately high quality images of the preserved types as well as images of formally live specimens were available for presentation. The use of such zoological acts are not universally accepted and we draw attention to the counter arguments offered by Dubois & Nemésio (2007) and Ceriaco *et al.* (2016).

Serendipitously, however, the senior author recently relocated what were presumed to be the destroyed type specimens during a comprehensive organization of the junior author’s preserved turtle collection. Both the male holotype and female paratype were clearly labeled and separately bagged in an additional preservation freezer; the preterition was apparently due to their being categorized by drainage system of the formerly considered widespread species *Eleya novaeguineae*. Both specimens were perfectly preserved and fully intact. These specimens have now been formally accessioned with registration numbers at the Division of Vertebrate Zoology, Yale Peabody Museum, located in New Haven, Connecticut, United States of America.

Because recent extensive searches of habitat along the Berau Gulf failed to locate any further field specimens, Joseph-Ouni & McCord raised the possibility that the new subspecies was extinct; the original series of five adults

JOSEPH-OUNI, M. & MCCORD, W.P. 2025. ‘Rediscovery’ of the type series of *Eleya caelatus berau* (Testudines: Chelidae) - registration and current images. *Chelonological Contributions* 4, CC Notae #2: 6pp. <http://doi.org/10.70661/ChelContribmdx9206542952>

had been collected in 1994. Regrettably we remain unaware of any additional specimens either from the field or accessioned in museums. A reevaluation of the morphology, systematics and distribution of the species *Elseya caelatus* throughout its range is in preparation. For now we here record the newly assigned museum registration numbers of the type series of *E. c. berau* with new high-quality digitally imaged specimens in their current condition upon relocation.

## SPECIMEN REGISTRATIONS

### BERAU SNAPPING TURTLE

*Elseya (Hanwarachelys) caelatus berau* Joseph-Ouni & McCord, 2023

Figures 1 - 6.

**Holotype.-** An adult male specimen, collected by F. Yuwono in 1994 from wetlands in the vicinity of Semberai, upper Wasian River, southeastern Vogelkop Peninsula, West Papua Province, Indonesia (New Guinea); this specimen was designated the holotype under the provisions of ICZN Code Article 73.1.4 and appeared in the high-quality images in Plate 1 of Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2023), as photographed naturally deceased in 2004 (plate reproduced here as Figure 2 for comparative purposes). The relocated holotype (Figure 1) is now museum accessioned with registration number YPM HERR.022597.

**Paratype.-** An adult female specimen, collected by F. Yuwono in 1994 from wetlands in the vicinity of Semberai, upper Wasian River, southeastern Vogelkop Peninsula, West Papua Province, Indonesia (New Guinea); this specimen was designated the paratype under the provisions of ICZN Code Article 73.1.4 and appeared in the high-quality images in Plate 2 of Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2023), as photographed naturally deceased in 2004 (plate reproduced here as Figure 4 for comparative purposes). The relocated paratype (Figure 3) is now museum accessioned with registration number YPM HERR.022598.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Gregory Watkins-Colwell, Collection Manager in the Division of Vertebrate Zoology, Yale Peabody Museum, for his assistance with the registration and accessioning of the two type specimens and the journal's editor for corrections to the manuscript.

## LITERATURE CITED

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- Joseph-Ouni, M. & McCord, W.P. 2023. A strange new subspecies of *Elseya caelatus* (Testudines: Chelidae) from the Berau Gulf region, New Guinea. *The Batagur Monographs* 8: 7-27.



**Figure 1.** New digital imagery of the current state of the male holotype of *Elseya caelatus berau* registered now as YPM HERR 022597 as it appears after 'rediscovery'. Compare to images from the original description (Plate 1 of Joseph-Ouni & McCord, 2023) reproduced here as Figure 2.

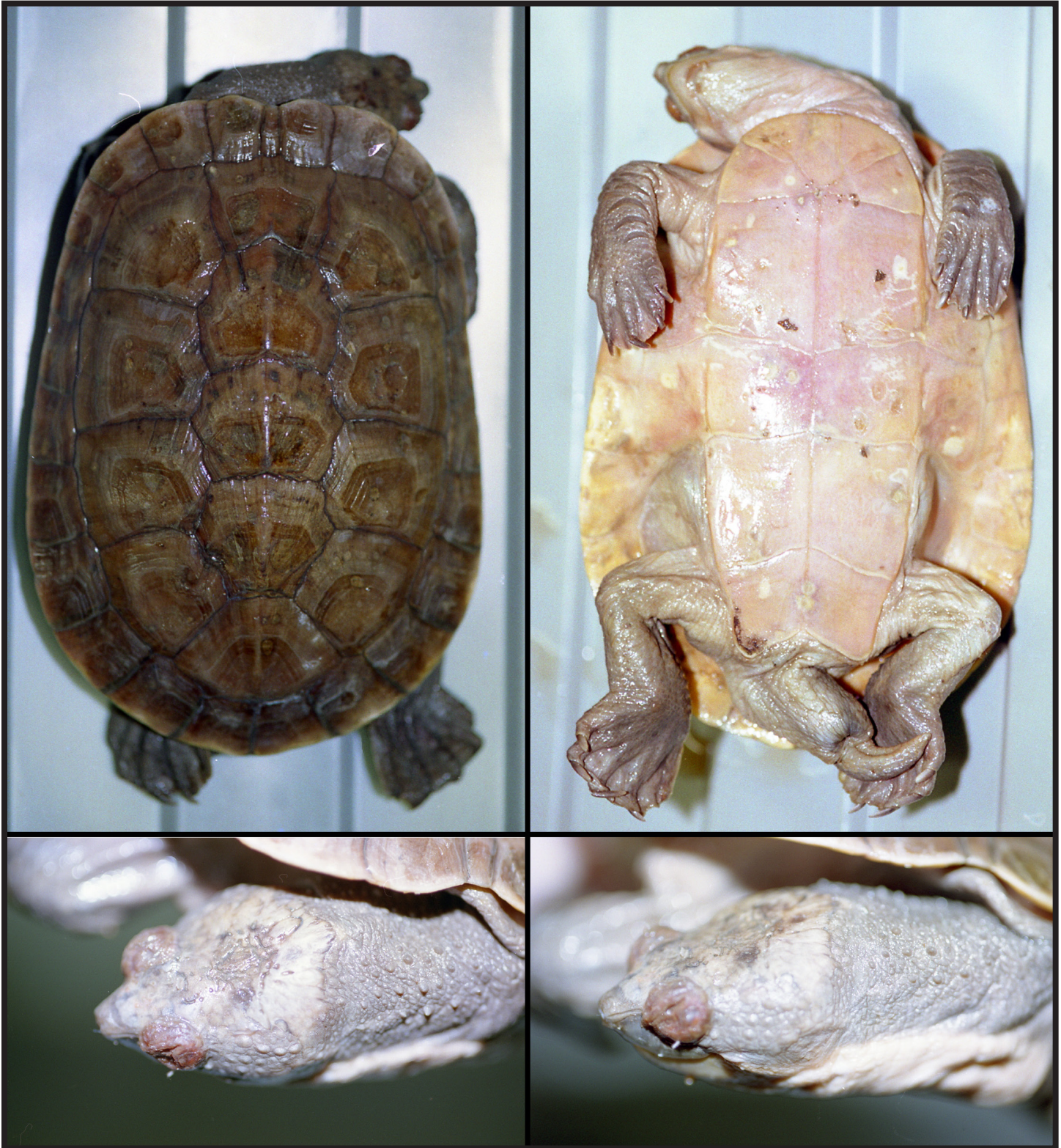
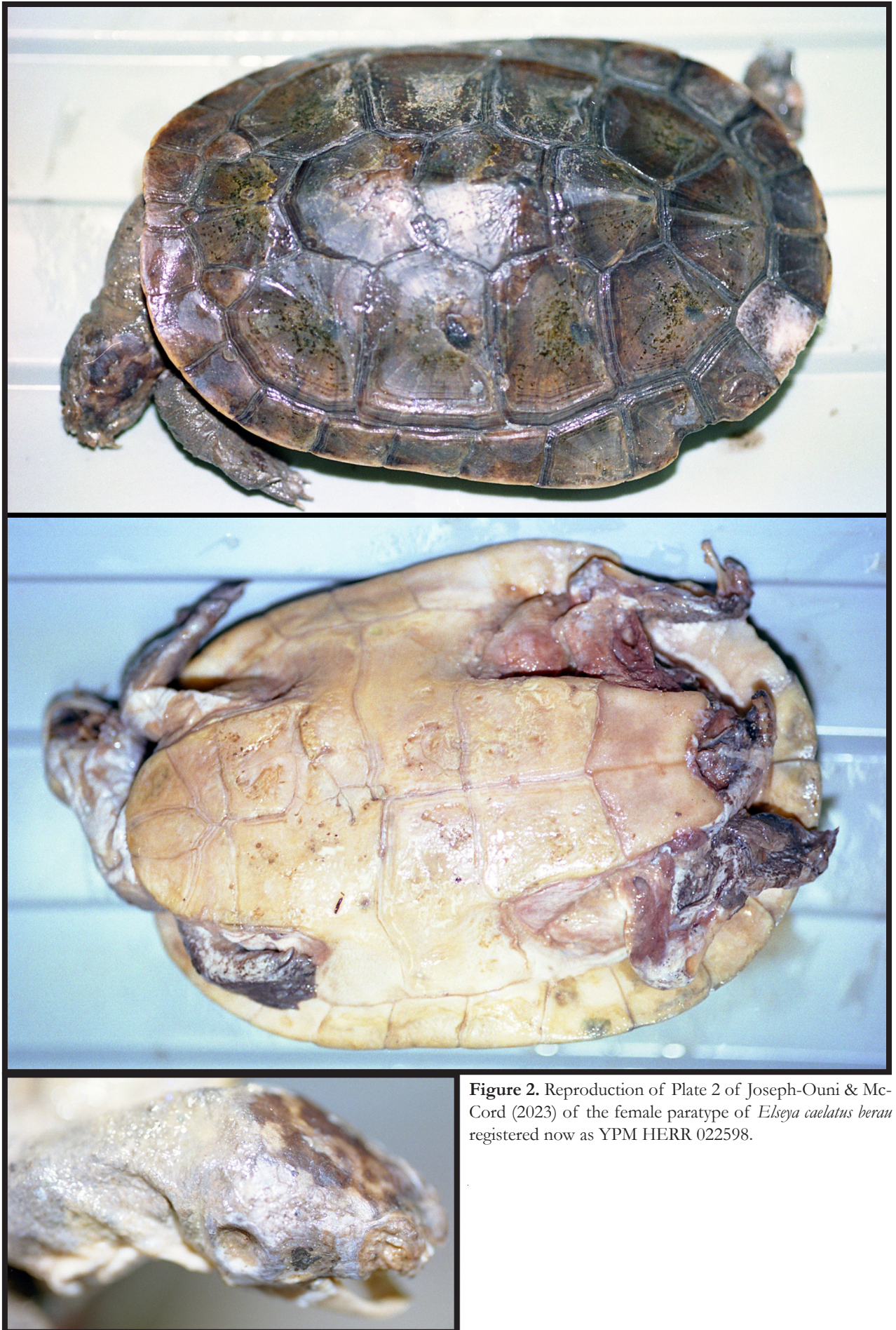


Figure 2. Reproduction of Plate 1 of Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2023) of the male holotype of *Elseya caelatus berau* registered now as YPM HERR 022597.



**Figure 3.** New digital imagery of the current state of the female paratype of *Elseya caelatus berau* registered now as YPM HERR 022598 as it appears after ‘rediscovery’. Compare to images from the original description (Plate 2 of Joseph-Ouni & McCord, 2023) reproduced here as Figure 4.



**Figure 2.** Reproduction of Plate 2 of Joseph-Ouni & McCord (2023) of the female paratype of *Elseya caelatus berau* registered now as YPM HERR 022598.