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## SPECIES BRIEFING DOCUMENT – Wildlife Crime Case Information

### Details of specimens

<b>Scientific Name</b>	<i>Geoemyda japonica</i>
<b>Common Name(s)</b>	Japanese leaf turtle Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle
<b>Specimens Description</b> e.g. live, skin, carcass	Living specimens for pet trade
<b>Quantity</b> e.g. head, weight(kg)	
<b>Trade Value Estimate</b> Illegal/legal trade value	USD 1357 per individual (Sung & Fong 2018) USD8,500 per individual and USD23,000 a pair website: hkturtle.org
<b>Declared Origin of Consignment</b>	
<b>Declared Destination of Consignment</b>	

### Species Global Status and Threats

<b>IUCN Red List Category</b>	Endangered	<b>CITES Appendix</b>	II
<b>Country of Origin (Natural Range)</b>	Japan (Nansei-shoto)		
<b>Major Threat(s)</b>	Habitat loss, pollution, over-collection		
<b>Notes</b>	Considered a National Treasure in Japan and nationally protected		

### Victim Impact Statement (Country of Origin)

e.g. Ecological/Social/Economical Impact to the country of origin

<p>The species is endemic to central Ryuku Islands, and population on some islands were found to be small and declining (Yasukawa &amp; Ota 2008).</p> <p>Japan submitted their first ever proposal to CITES on this species due to ongoing poaching and international and illegal trade (Auliya et al. 2016)</p> <p>30 individuals, valued at USD 1357 per individual, were recorded for sale on an internet forum in Hong Kong between September 2013 and August 2016 (Sung &amp; Fong 2018).</p>
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According to UNODC World WISE database, nine of the top ten CITES listed, wild-sourced live reptile species seized between 2007 and 2017 (based on head count) were tortoises and fresh water turtles.

## Victim Impact Statement (Local)

e.g. Ecological/Social/Economical Impact to Hong Kong

This species is not considered as native to Hong Kong

## Wildlife Welfare Concern

e.g. Specimen's health/transport condition, cruel poaching/slaughtering practice

When smuggling turtles, their trunks and four limbs could be wrapped by plastic tapes and put inside smuggler's baggage (CED 2018), with no access to food or water. Additionally, smugglers often put as many turtles as possible into individual boxes to maximize shipments, further restricting their behavior (Schoppe 2008).

## Disease and Pathogen Concern to Human and Local Environment

e.g. Carrier of zoonotic disease/pathogen/parasite

Generally, turtles are considered as unsafe pets, especially for households with children, since they are known to be carriers and natural reservoirs of *Salmonella* serotypes (Marin et al. 2016)

## Relevant Previous Cases

e.g. References to previous cases of relevance, outcome, penalty, post seizure costs passed onto Government and NGOs

### **DCCC 119/2019**

In Oct 2018 a Japanese male was arrested at Hong Kong International Airport with 60 live Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtles inside his suitcase. A starting point of 21 months' imprisonment was imposed.

### USA

In February 2017, Hsien Lin Hsu, a man residing in New York City, pleaded guilty to smuggling endangered turtles, including 4 big headed turtles, 10 Indian roofed turtles, 37 yellow margined Chinese Box turtles and 12 Japanese leaf turtles into the USA. The turtles were hidden in packets of noodle and candy sent from Hong Kong. When questioned, Mr. Hsu admitted that he had struck a deal with turtle suppliers in Hong Kong to bring the reptiles into the country illegally.

## China

In 2015, a man was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment and fined RMB 20,000 for smuggling 8 Japanese leaf turtles from Macau to Zhuhai.

## Further Expert Comment

e.g. local knowledge about species, future conservation concerns, invasive risks, IUCN/CITES up-listing proposals

Dr Sung Yik Hei, Lingnan University  
Dr Michael Lau, Hong Kong Wetlands Conservation Association  
Dr Gary Ades, Kadoorie Farm and Botanical Garden

### **References:**

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<https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/9042/97362115>

Alternate:



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