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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Chinese Softshell Turtle

Pelodiscus sinensis

Pelodiscus sinensis is an almost entirely aquatic softshell turtle from central and southern China and Taiwan with a leathery shell and a long, snorkel-like snout. The shell grows to 25-33 cm long, and the animal can live over 25 years. The species is vulnerable in the wild and needs a large, filtered aquarium with a soft sand bottom, clean, warm water and full escape-proofing.

Family: Trionychidae Former name: *Trionyx sinensis*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**25-33 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**25-30 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Aquatic**
Habitat	**Wetland**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**180 × 80 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-30 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-26 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 30-40 cm
Water temperature	**25-28 °C**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects, complete diet, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**48-72 months**
Clutch size	**8-30 eggs**
Clutches per year	**2-5**
Incubation	**50-65 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Keep the animal in a large aquarium or a closed tub, not in an ordinary terrarium. The species is almost entirely aquatic, fast and active and grows large.
TEMPERATURE	The water should be 25-28 °C all year round. If the water is too cold, the metabolism slows and the animal digests poorly; if it is too warm, the animal can overheat.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity is not documented for the species and matters little for an animal that lives in water; 50-80 % is an estimate.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The water should be deep, clean and warm. The depth is 30-40 cm for adults, so they can swim freely and reach the surface with their snout.
LIGHTING AND UVB	UVB is recommended, not strictly required. The species is diurnal, but it basks rarely, so many animals spend only a little time under the lamp. Even so, UVB provides vitamin D3, which the animal needs to absorb calcium.
FEEDING	*P. sinensis* is mainly carnivorous. Give whole prey: small fish, shrimp, krill, earthworms, water snails, crayfish and feeder insects such as crickets and grasshoppers, which are snapped up eagerly when they land on the water.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*P. sinensis* is shy, but fast and strong. The neck is long and flexible, and the head can reach astonishingly far back along the shell towards the hand holding the animal.
NATIVE RANGE	China and Taiwan.