



INTRODUCED SPECIES

# First Georeferenced Report of a Non-native West African Mud Turtle, *Pelusios castaneus* (Schweigger 1812), in Florida

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Miami-Dade County, Florida, has long been a site of non-native turtle and other reptilian introductions, mostly from the pet trade, with species such as the Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) having established populations (Krysko et al. 2016). The genus *Pelusios* was first documented in Miami when Bartlett and Bartlett (1999) indicated that a population they identified as being the East African Black Mud Turtle, *Pelusios subniger* (Bonnaterre 1789), was established. However, the turtle in the non-georeferenced photograph

Bartlett and Bartlett (1999) provided is instead thought to be a West African Mud Turtle (*P. castaneus*) or an East African Yellow-bellied Mud Turtle (*P. castenoides*) (Somma 2022).

On 13 November 2020, we caught a West African Mud Turtle in a sardine-baited 1-m-diameter hoop trap in a medium-sized pond (0.4 ha) in a Miami park (25.722°N, 80.326°W). A photographic voucher was submitted to the Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida (UF 191206) and the male turtle was removed from the



**Fig. 1.** An adult male West African Mud Turtle (*Pelusios castaneus*) collected in Miami, Miami-Dade County, Florida, USA. Photograph by Hunter Howell.

pond. The identity of the species was confirmed by Andrews Agyekumhene of the University of Ghana. The turtle was 21.5 cm in straight carapace length and weighed 1.3 kg (Fig. 1). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first georeferenced *P. castaneus* to have been documented in Florida (Krysko et al. 2010, 2011, 2016). Despite considerable effort to find an established population (Somma 2022), no other individuals in the genus have been found. Other non-native turtle species, almost certainly released or escaped pets, are regularly found in urban ponds around Miami without evidence of established populations (Stemle 2020, 2021; Stemle and Levine 2020).

### Acknowledgement

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