Asian Box Turtles (Cuora amboinensis)

- Also known as the Ambiona Box turtle.
- These are medium sized to large turtles with a somewhat domed blackish brown to olive brown carapace, with blackish to grayish black skin and paler yellowish striping and/or streaking on the head and neck.
- Depending on the subspecies, these turtles are indigenous to southern and southeastern Asia including Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Borneo.
- Asian box turtles may attain longevity of 30-40 years or more with proper care. Sales of turtles under 4" in length are for bona fide educational purposes only.

Size

Depending on the subspecies, Asian box turtles usually reach a carapace (shell) length of 5 -12 inches, which females being larger than males.

Housing

Despite a common misnomer, these Asian box turtles are quite semi aquatic (and often are much more aquatic than terrestrial). Provide a sturdy, escape proof aquarium or commercially available turtle tub of sufficient size (at minimum a 55 gallon aquarium or similar sized enclosure) with an elevated dock or basking area/access to dry land using a substrate dam. Although they are largely aquatic, basking opportunities should still be provided. Provide a minimum of 10 gallons of space per inch of shell, or about 50-120 gallons for most adult Asian box turtles. They are not great swimmers, and should typically be kept with 4-8 inches of water. A powerful water filter rated at least twice that of the amount of water in the enclosure is highly recommended for aquatic turtles, as they are messy and require frequent cleaning and regular water changes. Use a submersible water heater with a guard to maintain water temperatures of 75-85 degrees F. Substrate is optional, and foregoing it makes for easier cleaning and maintenance, but small to medium sized gravel can be used. Additional rocks, logs, live or artificial foliage can also be provided for additional foraging and hiding opportunities.

Additional overhead lighting and heating elements are necessary to maintain optimal health and nutrition for these turtles. Provide a basking area or platform with UVB and UVA for your turtle to emerge completely from the water and monitor at around 85-90 degrees F.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, Asian box turtles are quite omnivorous, feeding on carrion, small fish, snails, crustaceans, mussels/clams, and other aquatic invertebrates as well as various fruits and vegetables.

In captivity, Asian box turtles tend to be omnivorous, and can be given a variety of prey or food items including commercialized turtle pellets and diets, small feeder fish, leafy greens such as turnip, mustard, and collard greens, superworms, earthworms, mealworms, feeder roaches or crickets, freeze dried shrimp, and even small frozen/thawed pinkie mice (but avoid to much protein). They will also accept other fruits and vegetables as well such as bananas, tomatoes, watermelon, and berries. A varied diet is important, and providing some additional vitamin D3 and calcium supplementation during 2-3 times weekly feeding also is beneficial.

Handling

Asian box turtles are available as both captive bred and wild caught/imported specimens, with captive bred turtles tolerating handing better than imports. Captive born and raised Asian box turtles can become very tame and personable pets, often even

approaching their keepers for food. Handling these turtles from the rear of the carapace reduces the chances of being nipped or scratched when they are threatened, however. Overhandling, however, should be avoid to prevent stress to these turtles.
Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens