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RECORD OF A STRANGE ASSEMBLEGE OF SEA TURTLE SHELLS (*LEPIDO-CHELYS* Sp.) NEAR THE SOUTHERN PART OF DIGHA SHORE, WEST BENGAL.

In the course of attempts to search the breeding grounds of the horse-shoe crabs,* *Tachypleus gigas* (Müller) and *Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda* (Latreille) along the southern part of the Digha shore with two Japanese Scientists* during last April, 1977, nine full-sized dry skeleton shells of the sea turtle *Lepidochelys* sp. were noticed at one place lying side by side in a half buried and scattered condition on a plain sandy ground surrounded by sand dunes at a distance of approximately 150 metres from the sea. The shells on examination of and it appeared that they were buried for many years, as the original carapace, colour (olive green) of most of these shells had been lost and the white bony surfaces being exposed. The original colour patches were found here and there over the surfaces of a few carapaces only. Out of the nine shells, five shells were found in moderately good condition.

In one case, the dry half-broken head was found still lying joined with one shell. All these five shells (Plate VIII) were properly arranged, measured and photographed. Length of the carapaces of all the nine shells varies between 65.4 cm.—70.2 cm. In five cases, both the carapace and plastron were found to be still in joined condition but in other four cases only the carapace were found.

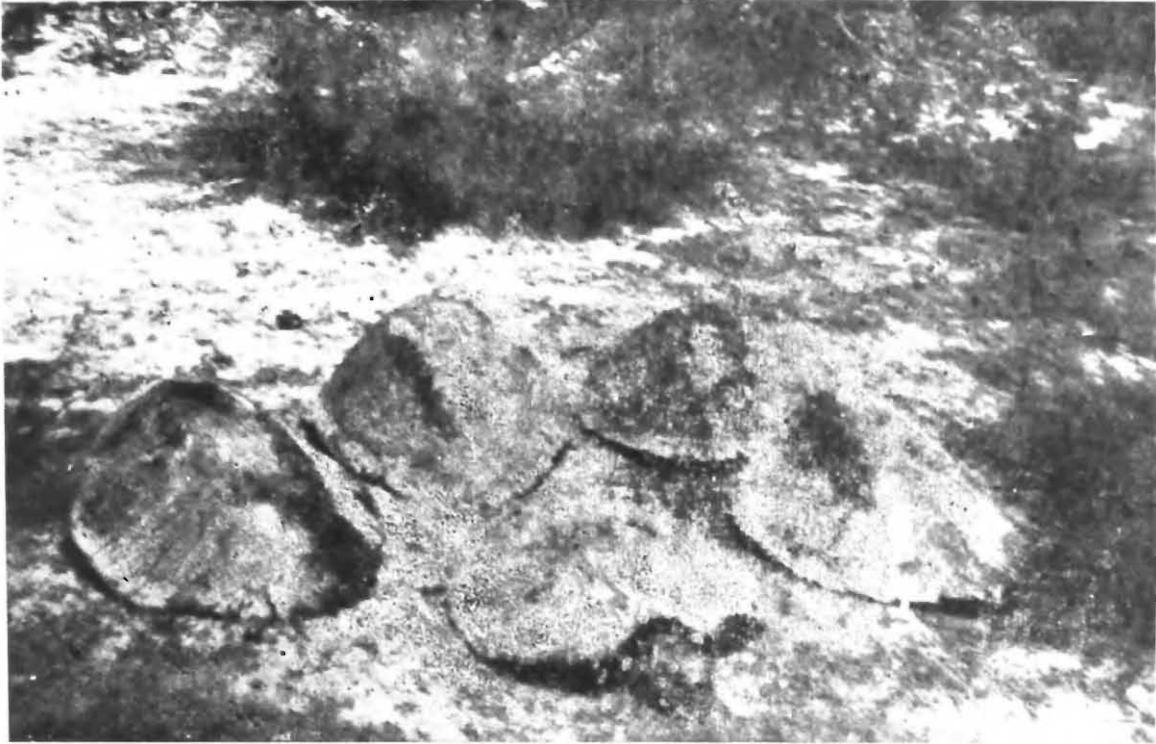
According to the discussions the author had with the specialists of this department this sort of peculiar assemblege is extremely unusual and unknown and attributed to the facts that this might be due to some sort of natural calamity.

It may be explained that due to the natural egg-laying instinct, the concerned sea turtles might have come together at this spot for egg-laying but were suddenly trapped due to some unnatural calamity.

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* The author accompanied a team of Japanese Scientists during April-May, 1977 as Liaison Officer in connection with their research works on Indian horse-shoe crabs along the West Bengal coastal regions.



Dry skeleton shell of the sea turtle
Lepidochelys sp.