

# Black Softshell Turtle

The Black Softshell Turtle, also known as the Indian Softshell Turtle, is a large freshwater turtle species native to South Asia. They are known for their unique appearance, with a soft, leathery shell and dark skin. In this article, we will discuss the general features, habitat, food habits, breeding, and conservation status of the Black Softshell Turtle. We will also suggest some places in India where one can see them and the best time of year to do so.

## General Features

The Black Softshell Turtle is a large species of turtle, with adult males weighing between 20-30 kilograms, and females weighing between 30-40 kilograms. They have a distinctive soft, leathery shell, which is dark brown or black in color. The skin is also dark in color, with a rough texture.

## Habitat



The Black Softshell Turtle is found in the Assam and Tripura river systems. They are also spread in smaller numbers in

North Indian states. They prefer slow-moving rivers, ponds, and wetlands with sandy or muddy bottoms. They are also found in agricultural fields, particularly rice paddies, where they feed on insects and other small invertebrates.

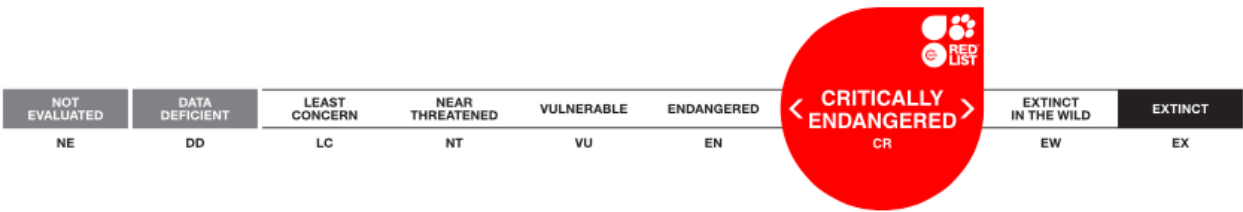
## Food Habits

The Black Softshell Turtle is an omnivorous species, which means they eat both plants and animals. They feed on a variety of food items, including insects, snails, small fish, and aquatic plants. In agricultural fields, they are known to feed on rice paddies’ pests, making them useful to farmers.

## Breeding

The Black Softshell Turtle breeds during the monsoon season, which usually lasts from June to September. Females lay their eggs in nests dug in sandy soil or in areas with soft soil. They typically lay between 10-30 eggs, and the incubation period is between 70-90 days. The hatchlings emerge in September and October.

## Conservation Status



The Black Softshell Turtle is listed as “Critically endangered” on the IUCN Red List, which means they are almost extinct in the wild. The main threat to their survival is habitat loss due to human activities such as agriculture, urbanization, and infrastructure development. Hunting and collection for the pet trade also pose a significant threat to

the species.

## **Steps Being Taken**

The Indian government has listed the Black Softshell Turtle under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, which provides it with the highest level of protection. Conservation organizations are also working to protect the species by creating awareness among local communities, conducting research on their ecology and behavior, and restoring degraded habitats.

## **Places to see Black Softshell Turtles in India**

One of the best places to see Black Softshell Turtles is the rivers of Assam. Many ponds and temples also have these in small numbers. The river is home to a large population of the species, and boat tours are available for tourists to see them in their natural habitat. Another place to see the Black Softshell Turtle is the Kukrail Reserve Forest in Lucknow, which is also home to a small population of the species.

## **Best Time to Visit**

The best time to see Black Softshell Turtles in India is during the monsoon season, which usually lasts from June to September. During this time, the turtles are active and visible, and breeding activity can also be observed.