

Indian softshell turtle

The Indian softshell turtle (*Nilssonia gangetica*) is a freshwater turtle species found in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand.

General Features

The Indian softshell turtle is a large turtle that can grow up to 60 cm in length and can weigh up to 50 kg. They have a flattened, soft shell that is covered with a leathery skin. Their head is broad, with a long snout, and they have powerful jaws. They have a greyish-brown colored skin with black spots and a light-colored underbelly.

The number of eggs laid by Indian softshell turtles can vary depending on the size and age of the female, as well as other factors such as food availability and environmental conditions. On average, females of this species lay between 10-30 eggs per clutch, with some larger females laying up to 60 eggs in a single clutch.

Habitat and Distribution

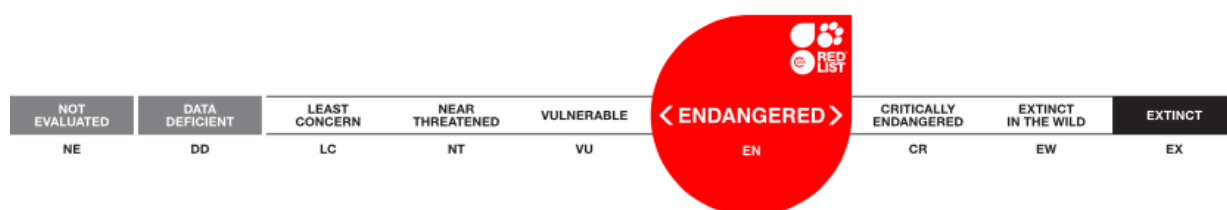


The Indian softshell turtle is found in the river systems of Ganges, Brahmaputra, Mahanadi, and Godavari river systems. They prefer slow-moving rivers and shallow, muddy or sandy bottoms, where they can bury themselves in the mud to escape predators and regulate their body temperature.

Food Habits

The Indian softshell turtle is omnivorous and feeds on a variety of plants and animals. They feed on aquatic plants, insects, crustaceans, mollusks, and small fish. They are also known to scavenge on dead animals.

Conservation Status



The Indian softshell turtle is classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The primary threats to their survival are habitat loss, hunting, and trade for food and traditional medicine. The destruction of nesting sites and riverine habitats due to dam construction, sand mining, and deforestation has led to a decline in their population. Additionally, hunting of adults and collection of eggs for food and traditional medicine have also contributed to their decline.

Conservation efforts

The Government of India has taken several steps to conserve the Indian softshell turtle. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 has banned the hunting and trade of all species of

turtles and tortoises. The Forest Department of various states in India is involved in the conservation of these turtles. The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, has set up a breeding and conservation program for the Indian softshell turtle. The program aims to increase the population of these turtles by breeding them in captivity and releasing them back into the wild.

Places to spot Indian softshell turtles in India

The Indian softshell turtle can be spotted in various river systems in India, including the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Mahanadi, and Godavari. However, the best place to spot them is the Yamuna River. The best time to visit the sanctuary is from November to March when the weather is pleasant.

Conclusion

The Indian softshell turtle is a vulnerable species found in the river systems of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand. They are large turtles that are omnivorous and prefer slow-moving rivers with shallow, muddy or sandy bottoms. The primary threats to their survival are habitat loss, hunting, and trade for food and traditional medicine. The government of India has taken several steps to conserve them, including the ban on hunting and trade of all species of turtles and tortoises. The Chambal River and the National Chambal Sanctuary are the best places to spot Indian softshell turtles in India.