

# Northern River Terrapin

The Northern River Terrapin, also known as the Indian or Ganges River Terrapin, is a freshwater turtle species found in South and Southeast Asia, including India. In this article, we will discuss the general features, habitat, food habits, breeding, conservation status, and where one can see them in India.

## General features

The Northern River Terrapin is a large turtle species, with males measuring around 55-60 cm in length and females around 80-90 cm. They have a distinctive carapace (upper shell) with a brownish-black coloration and a smooth texture. The plastron (lower shell) is usually yellowish or cream-colored. They are relatively heavy-bodied, with males weighing around 15-20 kg and females around 25-30 kg.

## Habitat and distribution



The Northern River Terrapin is found in a variety of freshwater habitats, including rivers, streams, and lakes, with soft substrate and thick vegetation cover. In India, they

are found in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Mahanadi river systems, mainly in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Odisha.

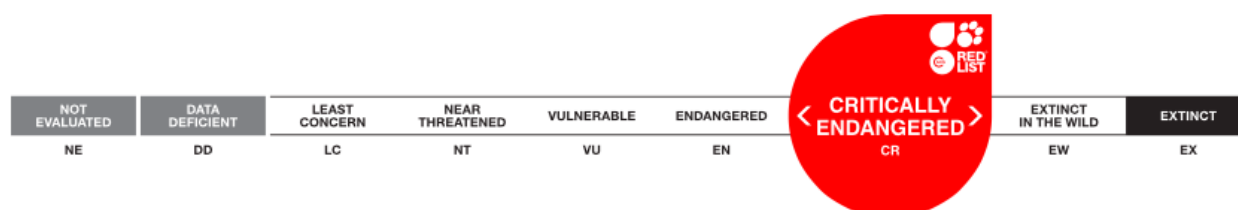
## Food habits

The Northern River Terrapin is an omnivore and feeds on a variety of plant and animal matter. They feed on leaves, fruits, flowers, insects, crustaceans, mollusks, and fish. They are known to be opportunistic feeders and will eat whatever is available in their habitat.

## Breeding

The breeding season of Northern River Terrapins starts in the rainy season (June-August). They mate in water, and females lay eggs in sandy soil on riverbanks. A clutch of 10-20 eggs is laid, and the incubation period lasts for around 60-90 days. The hatchlings emerge in the post-monsoon season (November-December) and are usually around 5-7 cm long.

## Conservation status



The Northern River Terrapin is considered to be a critically endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to habitat destruction, over-exploitation for food and traditional medicine, and collection for the pet trade. The government of India has listed the species under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which provides full protection. Conservation efforts are underway to

protect the species and its habitat, including captive breeding programs, habitat restoration, and awareness campaigns among local communities.

## **Where to see them**

Northern River Terrapins are found in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Mahanadi river systems in India, mainly in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Odisha. They are most commonly seen basking on the banks of rivers or swimming in the water. Some of the best places to see them are the Chambal River Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary in Bihar, and the Bhitarkanika National Park in Odisha. The best time to see them is during the winter season (November-February), when the water levels are low, and the turtles are more visible.