Indian Star Tortoise
Geochelone elegans

Once the commonest tortoises across the Indian subcontinent, Indian star tortoises are now limited to two disjunct localities of their historical geographic range. With increase in poaching and pet trade, they have become rare in the wild where they were once abundant. The unique star-like yellow markings on black carapace is a natural adaptation to camouflage in their arid and natural habitats. Unfortunately, this has led to them becoming the stars of illegal wildlife pet trade.

**IUCN RED LIST**
- **VULNERABLE**

**CITES**
- **APPENDIX I**

**WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT 1972**
- **SCHEDULE IV**

**Age of maturity:** 6-7 years.

**Sizes:** (CL: Carapace length)  
- Hatchling: 3-4 cm
- Adult Male: Min 15 cm  
- Adult Female: Min 25 cm

**Sexual dimorphism in adults only:** Larger females with broader shells; males have longer thicker tails.

**Nesting season:** Coincides with monsoon varying as per geographic location; Usually two annual clutches (2-10 eggs).

**Egg shells:** 36-52 mm by 27.89 mm in length and width; thinner and brittle shells.

**Population Status:**
- Wild populations are present in both protected and non-protected areas, and human dominated landscapes in range states.

**Threats to survival:**
- Illegal collection and habitat loss.
- Illegal collection for commercial wildlife trade is the main threat to the species' survival.
- Ownership of star tortoises as pets has been a long-held cultural practice in northwestern Indian states. In some rural areas, the species is sometimes consumed for subsistence.
- However, large scale international commercial trade is a relatively new and rapidly increasing trend. It has turned into the most significant threat to the wild population.
- Indian star tortoises are the most confiscated species of tortoise or freshwater turtle worldwide with two-thirds of all seized tortoises from India in 2017.

**Top five species of turtles/tortoises in trade in terms of numbers in trade:**
- Indian Star Tortoise
- Indian Softshell Turtle
- Indian Flapshell Turtle
- Spotted Hard Turtle
- Indian Roof Turtle

**Habitat:**
- The Indian star tortoise is a terrestrial species, characteristically prefers arid and semi-arid habitats. It is naturally found in scrub forests, grasslands, and scrublands.

**Why Indian Star Tortoises should not be kept as pets:**
- They often have incomplete diet different from their natural preference.
- This may cause carapacial deformities.
- Outside their native range, it is difficult to maintain the natural weather settings to which they have adapted.
- Large scale demand for pets is actually emptying the wild of Indian stars.

**How to help:**
- Although Indian star tortoises need help throughout their range for sustained survival in the wild, there are many things we can still do as individuals to help.
- Remember that wildlife is a true home where they belong.
- Spread awareness about the negative impact of illegal pet trade on star tortoises everywhere.
- Keep in mind and inform others that it is illegal to keep star tortoises as pets in India. It's punishable offence.
- When you encounter a star tortoise, let it pass without disturbing it.
- When you see a star tortoise in danger or distress, contact the nearest forest department or wildlife authority for help.

**Distribution Map**

**WorldWildlifeDay**
- Keep them ForeverWild

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इंडियन स्टार 
टोर्टोइज्ज
जियोफेक्टोनी एलीमेंट्स

पूर्व काल में भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप में आम तौर पर पाए जाने वाले इंडियन स्टार टोर्टोइज्ज अब मात्र दो भोगीैक इलाकों में रह रहा है। इसका रिकार्ड और पालन बायाँक के कारण बुनतात्मक संरचना में मौजूद हुआ करुण अब डूब है।

इस कारण के शास्त्रीय व्यवहार में समस्त अलावा यह काफी अलग आयु के कारण कवच/करोडी पर दौड़ी विचित्री रूपों से प्रावत करते है। इलेक्ट्रीणु पुरुष यह विचित्र रूपों उनके अवैध व्यवहार का सबसे बड़ा कारण है।

IUCN RED LIST  
• VULNERABLE

CITES  
• परिशिष्ट I

भारतीय संरचना अलाविनम 1972  
• अनुसूची IV

अवैधता का पुरुष (¢) और 
विचित्री लड़की (¢¢), 
केंद्र लाइव: 3-4 सप्तमी।

प्रिंट नर का पुरुष (¢) और 
विचित्री लड़की (¢¢), 
केंद्र लाइव: 15 सप्तमी।

प्रिंट नर का पुरुष (¢) और 
पुरुषों की रात (¢¢), 
केंद्र लाइव: 25 सप्तमी।

अवैधता व विचित्री 
क्षेत्री की क्षेत्री 
संरचना दर्शाव

प्रवेश के प्रावत

अवैधता व विचित्री 
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संरचना दर्शाव

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क्षेत्री की क्षेत्री 
संरचना दर्शाव
Indian Star Tortoise
Geochelone elegans

Once the commonest tortoises across the Indian subcontinent, Indian star tortoises are now limited to two disjoint locations of their historical geographic range. With increase in poaching and pet trade, they have become rare in the wild where they were once abundant. The unique star like yellow markings on black carapace is a natural adaptation to camouflage in their arid

Age of maturity: 6-7 years.

Sizes (CL: Carapace length): Hatchling: 3-4 cm; Adult Male: Min 15 cm; Adult Female: Min 25 cm

Sexual dimorphism in adults only: Larger females with broader shells; males have longer thicker tails.

Nesting season: Coincides with monsoon varying as per geographic location; Usually two annual clutches (2-10 eggs).

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Top five Species of turtles/tortoises in trade

- Indian Star Tortoise
- Indian Softshelled Turtle
- Indian Broad-headed Turtle
- Spotted Pond Turtle
- Indian Roof Turtle

Population Status

- Wild populations are present in both protected and nonprotected areas, and human dominated landscapes in range states.
- Due to illegal trade, many individuals have been introduced outside their native range.

Threats to survival

- Illegal collection and habitat loss. Illegal collection for commercial wildlife trade is the main threat to the species’ survival.
- Ownership of star tortoises as pets has been a long held cultural practice in northwestern Indian states. In some rural areas, the species is sometimes consumed for subsistence.
- However, large scale international commercial trade is a relatively new and rapidly increasing trend. It has turned into the most significant threat to the wild population.

Habitat

- The Indian star tortoise is a terrestrial species that characteristically prefers arid and semi-arid habitats. It is naturally found in scrub forests, grasslands and scrublands.
- It also inhabits human modified landscapes like agricultural fields and plantations.

Nesting

- Hatchling females dig a chamber approximately 10-15 cm deep with a pot shaped bottom which they cover and isolate.

Tracks

- Alternating marks with teeth usually in single line.

Why Indian Star Tortoises should not be kept as pets.

- They often have incomplete diet different from their natural preference.
- They may cause caecal deformities.
- Outside their native range, it is difficult to maintain the natural weather settings to which they have adapted.
- Large scale demand for pets is actually exploiting the wild offends scars.

Diet

- Largely herbivorous, feeding on many grasses, herbaceous succulent species, fruits and female flowers. Carnivorous habits have been captive species deprived of complete natural diet and in maintaining a periodic supply from live rodents and from adults.

How to help

- Spread awareness about the negative impact of illegal pet trade on star tortoise population.
- Contact the forest department in your area if you find a stranded or injured tortoise.
- If you encounter a star tortoise, let it go without disturbing it.
- If you suspect or know of illegal trade in endangered species, contact the nearest forest department or the police for help.