



# A Color-aberrant Nagpur Soft-shelled Turtle (*Nilssonia leithii*) from India

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The Nagpur Soft-shelled Turtle, *Nilssonia leithii* (Gray 1872) (Trionychidae) is a large freshwater turtle endemic to Peninsular India, where it has a restricted distribution spanning the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana (notably absent from Goa) (Das et al. 2014). Given its limited range and declining populations, the Nagpur Soft-shelled Turtle is currently classified as critically endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Praschag et al. 2021).

On 2 July 2022, a subadult Nagpur Soft-shelled Turtle (carapace length ~45 cm, weight ~2–2.5 kg) (Fig. 1) was rescued by Mr. Pramod Thorve, a local resident of Bhor, Pune

District, Maharashtra, India (18.153972, 73.838028), and the Forest Department of Maharashtra, Pune Division, was informed. Upon examination, the turtle appeared healthy with no visible injuries. However, its coloration deviated substantially from the typical gray or grayish-olive with yellow vermiculations described for the species by Das et al. (2014). Instead, it had a golden carapace with pale brown reticulated edges; its snout, skin, and limbs were pale brown with a golden hue; and it notably lacked yellow, red, or orange markings on the mouth and forehead. To ensure proper care, the turtle was transported to the Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (ARRC) of Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park & Research Centre, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

A review of relevant literature (Uetz et al. 2024), including the publication by Mahabal and Thakur (2014) on aberrant coloration in Indian herpetofauna, revealed no prior reports of color aberrations in Nagpur Soft-shelled Turtles. So, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first documented record of a color-aberrant *N. leithii*. Documenting such variations can provide valuable insights into the causal genetic or environmental factors. Further investigation is needed to understand the potential underlying cause(s) of this particular color variant.

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**Figure 1.** Color-aberrant Nagpur Soft-shelled Turtle (*Nilssonia leithii*) rescued in Bhor, Pune District, Maharashtra, India. Photograph by Shubham Pande.

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