



First Record of the Indian Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle (*Chitra indica*) from Arunachal Pradesh, India

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The Indian Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle (*Chitra indica*) is a large freshwater turtle (carapace lengths to at least 110 cm) found on the Indian Subcontinent, including, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan (Ahmed et al. 2009; I. Das and Singh 2009; Uetz et al. 2025). The species is listed as Endangered (EN) on the IUCN Red List assessment (Asian

Turtle Trade Working Group 2000), although statements by Engstrom et al. (2002) indicated that an update of the Red List status is warranted since it treats the taxon as being monotypic (see also Webb 1981 and Farkas 1994). In India, the species has been facing large declines in number due to habitat degradation and hunting, with both adults and juve-



Figure 1. An Indian Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle (*Chitra indica*) from Tamak Piigo Water Conservation Project, Bizari, Arunachal Pradesh, India (ZRC(IMG) 2.687a–b). Photographs by Abu Tayeng.

niles extensively exploited for calipee, the fibro-cartilaginous leathery outer margin of the shell (I. Das and Singh 2009). The species is protected under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Ministry of Law and Justice 2022) and Appendix I of CITES (CITES 2025).

In India, the species has been recorded from Ganges, Godavari, Mahanadi, Sutlaj, Indus, Kerala, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab (Uetz et al. 2025), and from Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal (Inglis et al. 1920), Dhond in Maharashtra (Webb 1981), Coleroon River in Tamil Nadu (I. Das and Singh 2009), Fakirganj in Dhubri District of Assam (Datta 1997), and Shillong in Meghalaya (Sharma and Nakhasi 1981); in northeastern India, the species has been reported from Kaziranga National Park (Basumatary and Sharma 2013), the Barak Valley (K.C. Das and Gupta 2011), and the Orang National Park (Deka and Saikia 2015). However, no published reports are currently available from the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

We herein report an adult female *C. indica* (straight carapace length 42 cm) (Fig. 1) that was rescued on 15 September 2024 from a local market near Tamak Piigo Water Conservation Project, Bizari, Arunachal Pradesh (28.034331, 95.598042; elev. 186 m asl), a freshwater reservoir covering an area of 3.8 ha located about 2 km from the Dibang River. Locals from the market reported that the individual was caught from a nearby area in Bizari and brought to be sold in the local market. It was released back into the reservoir. The nearest published locality is about 51 m southwest in the Lohit River in the upper Brahmaputra Basin near Dibrus-Saikhowa National Park in Assam (Choudhury 1990). As the Dibang River is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River, where viable populations of the species exist, populations of *C. indica* in the Dibang River and Bizari are not entirely unexpected. Photographic vouchers of the individual from the market have been deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection, Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, National University of Singapore (ZRC(IMG) 2.687a–b) and its identity was confirmed by Arunima Singh (TSA Foundation India).

This record of *C. indica* from Arunachal Pradesh adds to the state's rich chelonian diversity and encourages more initiatives by local communities to rescue and save threatened turtle populations in the region. Additionally, this observation suggests that further surveys in nearby regions are necessary to investigate the possible presence of additional populations.

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Literature Cited

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