

Indian Star Tortoises

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In News: Indian star tortoises were seized while being smuggled from Andhra Pradesh to Odisha.

Geographic Range

- Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*) is found in three discrete portions of the Indian subcontinent:
 - The first is in western India and extreme southeastern Pakistan (e.g., Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh in India and the Thar Desert in Pakistan),
 - The second is in southeastern India (Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu), the third is on the island of Sri Lanka. No subspecies are recognized, although there are regional variations in color and morphology.
- Sri Lankan tortoises may have more contrasting shell patterns with broader yellow markings and they tend to reach larger sizes than southern Indian tortoises. However, much variation occurs among individual star tortoises and within local populations.

Habitat

- Indian star tortoises occupy a wide range of habitats, including moist deciduous forest, semi-arid lowland forests, thorn scrub forests, arid grasslands, and semi-desert.
- These tortoises have a high tolerance for seasonally wet or dry habitats, with many populations living in areas with a monsoon (rainy) season followed by an extensive hot and dry period.

Protection Status

- Wild Life Protection Act 1972: Schedule IV
 - Schedule IV: This list is for species that are not endangered. It includes protected species but the penalty for any violation is less compared to the Schedules I and II.
- Convention on International Trade in Species (CITES): Appendix I
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable