


A Report on
Indian National Freshwater Turtle and Tortoises Conservation
Priority Areas & Initiatives Workshop (22-24 October, 2010)

WORKSHOP & CORE-GROUP MEETING ON
**INDIAN FRESHWATER TURTLE AND TORTOISES
CONSERVATION PRIORITY AREAS AND INITIATIVES**





Organized by:
Indian Turtle Conservation Program of Turtle Survival Alliance
& Madras Crocodile Bank

Co-organizers:
Wildlife Institute of India
IUCN/SSC Tortoises & Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group

Sponsors:
WWF-Canada
Cleveland Zoological Society
San Diego Zoo

22 - 24 OCTOBER 2010, LUCKNOW, INDIA



Indian Turtle Conservation Program

December, 2010

1. The Workshop: India is large country with a diversity of habitats and chelonian species. The first Indian National Freshwater Turtle Conservation Meeting was held at the Kukrail Gharial (and Turtle) Centre to develop “Conservation Action Plan for Endangered Indian Turtles and Tortoises” in 2005. The meeting led to development of the document and several successful conservation actions in the field. After the five years executing the 2005 conservation action plan recommendations there was need to organise a meeting to review previous action plan and prioritise



BK Patnaik, Patrick Aust, BC Choudhury, Rick Hudson and Indraneil Das inaugurating the workshop through lamp lighting

countries important turtle areas and initiatives Recently the Indian Turtle conservation Program (ITCP), in

association with Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and IUCN/SSC Tortoises



Mr. Rick Hudson, Chairman, TSA speaking about TSA's ongoing turtle Conservation efforts in South Asia

and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group hosted the “Indian

Freshwater Turtle and Tortoises Conservation Priority Areas & Initiatives” workshop and core-group meeting. The ITCP is a joint countrywide initiative of the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and San Diego Zoo Global to protect threatened freshwater turtles and tortoises and their habitats. The workshop was co-sponsored by the TSA, WWF-Canada, Cleveland Zoological Society, San Diego Zoo Global and Seksaria Sugar Factory.

The workshop took place from October 22-24, 2010 at Hotel Piccadilly in Lucknow, the capital

city of Uttar Pradesh. The main objectives of the meeting were to review the implementation of the 2005 TSA/MCBT “Conservation Action Plan for Indian Endangered Turtles and Tortoises” and to discuss and prioritize important turtle areas for conservation action across India, while reviewing their potential to support new programs. Participants also were tasked with identifying competent local partners and collaborators for key turtle conservation initiatives.

2. Program and Process: Five priority turtle areas in India were identified and discussed at the meeting. These are the Chambal River and Upper Ganges River System (central India), the Terai Region (northern India), the state of Assam (northeastern India), the Sunderbans of West Bengal and the state of Orissa (eastern India), and the Western Ghats and the states of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh (southern India). When combined, these five above discussed areas support India’s most highly basis of endangered and charismatic turtles. Priority areas were selected on the basis of species richness, endemism, proportion of endangered turtles, and their potential to host successful conservation programs.

The workshop aimed to synchronize (and capitalize on the efforts of) the various organizations and



Captive Conservation and Vet care session in progress

individuals working to conserve chelonians in India. The workshop was endorsed by the Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Environment and Forests through an official message and as a part of the activities associated with the national agenda to achieve the goals for the “International Year of Biodiversity.”

By bringing together fifty national and international frontline researchers, conservationists, educators, socio-economists, managers, policy makers and NGO representatives from 12 different Indian states, the United States and Europe (list attached as annexure 2), the workshop sought to develop



Socio-economic/alternate livelihood session in progress

regional conservation action plans and identify immediate needs for the five Turtle Priority Areas.

Seventy people, from fifty institutions/ organisations from sixteen states in India besides 7 other countries, were invited in view of their demonstrated expertise, experience, and current interest in freshwater turtle conservation in India. Official Invitation (and reminder), workshop agenda, logistics circular, sample action plan including the tentative points of discussion along with other relevant document were circulated prior to the workshop. But only fifty people from 34 organisations in twelve Indian states and 4 other countries could join the workshop.

Various Committees, as detailed in the end of this section, were formed to efficiently organize, steer and review the workshop, its process and

recommendations in addition designating a expert as session chair for each of the technical and thematic session. Various presenters and experts from the respective area/ aspects moderated the group discussion under the supervision of the chair and session chair.

The workshop was chaired by renowned herpetologist, Prof. Indraneil Das (University Malaysia Sarawak) and vice-chaired by pioneer turtle and crocodylian biologist Prof. BC Choudhury from WII. Mr BK Patnaik (Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttar Pradesh Forest Department) and Mr. Rick Hudson (TSA President) kindly graced the event as Chief Guest and Guest of honour respectively.

Workshop Chair: Prof Indraneil Das and Vice-chair: Prof BC Choudhury, Convener: Shailendra Singh

Organizing Committee: Shailendra Singh, Sanjai Kumar IAS, Gowri Mallapur, Shruti Bajpai, Pradeep Saxena, Ashutosh Tripathi and KB Bhadauria

Workshop Steering Committee: Indraneil Das, BC Choudhury, Rick Hudson, Brian D Horne, Patrick Aust Sanjay Molur, Dhruvjyoti Basu, BK Gupta & Shailendra Singh

Review Committee: A K Shrivastava, Romulus Whitaker, Rick Hudson, Anders Rhodin, Peter Paul van Dijk, Dhurvjyoti Basu and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (WL) concerned State

3. Results: During 15 regional and thematic sessions, 35 presentations were made by researchers and experts to review past/current conservation initiatives (See Annexure 1) under the ITCP and other institutions/program, to share experiences and to propose possible future actions. The presentations were helpful in sparking follow-up discussions to finalize action plans and further recommendations.

For each session, presentation/s was made to update participants and later regional priorities were put forward to the participants to discuss and for final recommendations. Later in every evening, workshop steering committee was convened to further review and finalise the action points.

Some leading organizations like Zoo Outreach Organization, Wildlife Institute of India, TRAFFIC-India, and Centre for Environmental Education, Central Zoo Authority, and Development Alternatives

greatly expressed their commitments as national collaborators to the action plan, in addition to putting forward recommendations in their field of expertise.

The workshop identified a charismatic turtle species (ex: *Batagur kachuga*, *Chitra indica*, *Pangshura sylhetensis*, *Nilssonia leithii*) as flagship species for each regional



Brian D Horne moderates a workshop steering committee meeting

program and prioritized other species in terms of their immediate conservation need. On the basis of the rigorous review of the current situation and available (and possible future) resources regional actions were recommended.

In addition, participants were invited to step-up as regional partners to facilitate future programs in their

respective regions. The workshop recommended actions for each of the five areas and sessions held during the meeting were used to discuss conservation plans for the next decade. Plans include monitoring of head-started juveniles from TSA/state run hatcheries, habitat assessment for re-introduction programs, developing assurance colonies of critically endangered turtles, developing species-specific conservation strategies for a few critically endangered turtles, intensifying biological studies, halting illegal trade, rehabilitating rescued/confiscated turtle stocks, developing national and regional inter-operational strategies, enhancing community participation through education and social rehab initiatives and developing trained human resources. It became clear during the meeting that the turtle trade is possibly the biggest threat to surviving threatened Indian freshwater turtle and tortoises' populations and there is an urgent need for institutional cooperation to stop this threat.

The workshop also recommended holding five regional meetings in association of non-government and

government organizations of similar interest, in all five above discussed regions to invite regional players to discuss the recommendations to gain more practical grounds. It was also recommended that the regional plan may incorporate the training to the different target groups (student, forest department, veterinarians, temple committees etc) to facilitate long term turtle conservation in respective regions.

Currently the recommendations are being detailed and finalized by core drafting group. The plan will be later reviewed by the review committee during December 2010. The resulted action plan will be published and distributed across Indian and South Asian (especially species' range) countries to guide chelonian conservation efforts from the beginning of year 2011.

The alliance of ITCP and other regional partners will implement the recommendations from the national and regional action plans through mobilizing and facilitating conservation teams to achieve the objectives under the supervision of TSA and other leading conservation agencies.



Rick Hudson presenting "Freshwater Turtle Conservation Service Award -2010" to Suresh Pal Singh, KGRC

In addition, ITCP has set-up annual "Turtle Conservation Service Award" and "Turtle Field Conservation Award" this year. During the workshop, awards for the year 2010 were presented to Suresh Pal Singh (UPFD) and Bhasker M. Dixit (Terai Environmental Foundation) by Mr. Rick Hudson and Dr Patrick Aust. These awards were given to Mr. Singh and Mr. Dixit for their outstanding services for captive conservation and management of north Indian Turtles at state run Kukrail facility for over

25 years AND contribution to the TSA support turtle poacher conversion and rehabilitation program in Terai respectively.

4. **Workshop Materials:** the following documents / materials (photo appended as annexure) was developed and printed to distribute among the participants. Addition copies of the education materials (calendar and colouring book) were given to them to bring back to their respective regions.

- a) Background & program schedule
- b) Feedback document
- c) Eco-friendly jute folders
- d) Certificate to the participants
- e) Threatened Indian Turtle Calendar
- f) Turtle colouring book for Children
- e) Workshop mementos & souvenirs



Certificate for workshop participants

5. **Workshop Logistics:** Meeting was hosted in a state-of art five star facility, The Hotel Piccadilly in Lucknow. Food and accommodation for all attendees was covered for all three days at the workshop venue. A *Gazal* (Urdu songs) night along with



A view of Gazal night and welcome dinner

welcome dinner was organised. Post workshop guided tour for participants to Kukrail Gharial and Turtle Centre was organised. This occasion was also utilised to hold first Indian turtle conservation field researchers' meet.

5. Acknowledgements: The support of all above-mentioned organizations and their heads, board members and trustees - especially Mr AK Shrivastava, Ms Patricia Koval, Mr PR Sinha, Mr BK Patnaik, Dr Anders Rhodin, Mr. Romulus Whitaker- are greatly appreciated. The donation from Serenity foundation for printing turtle conservation calendars and colouring books is greatly appreciated. We greatly acknowledge Brian D. Horne, Sanjai Kumar IAS, Pradeep Saxena, Heather Lowe, Gowri Mallapur, Ashutosh Tripathi, KB Bhadauria, Indraneil Das, BC Choudhury, KK

Jha, Manish Mittal, Neeraj Kumar, Patrick Aust, Jonelle Waren, Kym Gopp, RP Singhal and Eva Sharma for their support in organizing this very important and inspiring event. Without their support this workshop would have not been possible. Local partner organisations- especially Terai Environmental Foundation, Katerniaghat Foundation and Turtle Conservation & Research Program- are acknowledged for all their assistance. Special thank is due to Mr Dhurvjyoti Basu, who provided untiring guidance in developing critical workshop documents and suggestions for organising various technical sessions. Thanks are due to all session chairs and moderators for all their efforts. Thanks are due to all attendees/invitees for their time, inputs to the process of the workshop.



Post workshop tour to Kukrail Ghairal and Turtle Centre

6. Financial Report: USD \$ 5000 (INR 220181) was thankfully received from WWF-Canada to contribute the total budget for this workshop through Madras Crocodile Bank Trust. A brief break-up of expenditure of the said amount is attached below:

ITEM	
Food and Accommodation (Part) at Hotel Piccadilly	145000
Travel (part)	25000
Workshop Material (Folders, printouts, banners etc)	25000
Transportation & Car hire for participants	14000
Overhead charges to Nodal agency MCB (5% of Total)	11009
Balance with Turtle Program	172
Total	220181



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Workshop Materials



Workshop in news

Annexure 1: Minute to Minute Program schedule

Day 0 (211010) Winter Hall	Organising Committee Meeting	0600-0700P
Winter Hall	Workshop Steering Committee Meeting	0700-0800
Dinner at Coffee Shop		0730 P onward
DAY I (221010) Friday: Inaugral Session 1	Speakers	Timing
Welcome address	Shruti Bajpai	0900-0910
Keynote address	BK Patnaik	0910 - 0930
TSA and Asian Turtle Conservation with special reference to India	Rick Hudson	0930-0950
Indian Turtle Conservation: Past, Present and Future/ Govt of India view point as sent by MoEF	BC Choudhury	0950-1010
Backgrounder and objectives of the meeting	Shailendra Singh	1010-1020
Chair's remark on workshop structure and process	Indraneil Das	1020-1030
Tea Break	Moderator/ Presenter	1030- 1100
Regional Session2: North-Central India Chambal, Yamuna & Upper Ganga region,	Manish Mittal	Moderator
Quick Regional Update (PowerPoint)	Ashutosh Tripathi & RK Sharma	1100– 1120
Proposed Regional Priorities (PP)	Brian D Horne	1120 - 1130
Follow up Discussion and finalisation	Participants	1130 - 1230
Regional Session 3: East India West Bengal/ Orissa	BC Choudhury	Moderator
Quick updates (PP)	Rupali Ghosh	1230-1250
Proposed Regional Priorities (PP)	Peter Praschag	1250- 0100
Lunch Break		0100-0200
Follow-up Discussion	Participants	0200-0300
Regional Session 4: Assam in North East India	Peter Praschag	Moderator
Quick updates (PP)	C Baruah	0330-0350
Proposed Regional Priorities (PP)	Peter Prashag	0350-0400
Follow-up discussion	Participant	0400-0500
Tea	Served in the meeting room	0400

Special Lecture/ Discussion: Networking and Outreach for Turtle Conservation	Sanjay Molur	0500-600
Welcome Dinner at Dawn Banquet Hall		0700 PM onwards
Day II (231010) Saturday		
Regional Session 5: Kerala/Karnataka, South India	Patrick Aust	Moderator
Quick updates (PP)	Shashwat Sirsi & V Deepak	0830- 0850
Proposed Regional Priorities (PP)	Nikhil Whitaker & BHC Murthy	0850 - 0900
Follow up Discussion	Participants	0900 -1000
Tea break		1000-1030
Regional Session 6: Terai region, Foothills of Himalayas, North India	Sunil Chaudhury	Moderator
Quick updates (PP)	Pradeep Saxena	1030-1050
Regional Priorities (PP)	Dhruv jyoti Basu	1050 - 1100
Follow up Discussion	Participants	1100-1200
Special session 7: Ex-situ Conservation, Husbandry and Vet Care	Eva Sharma & Raju Vyas	Moderator
Enhancing the role of Zoos and rescue centres for Freshwater Turtle & Tortoises Conservation	Brij Kishore Gupta	1220-1240
Basic Example of Head-starting and Vet care in an American Species	Sheena Koeth	1240-1250
Kukrail Centre: A success story for breeding and rearing turtles for conservation	Eva Sharma	1250-0100
Lunch		0100-0200
Follow up discussion	participants	0200-0240
Special Session 8: Trade, Rescue, Rehabilitation		
Turtle Trade: An overview of local, National and International	Abrar Ahmad	0240-0300
Rehabilitation and Reintroduction of Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises: Practice and Protocol	Sanjai Molur	0300-0320
Follow up Discussion	Participants	0320-0400
Special Session 9: Education & Awareness	KK Jha and Nirmal Kulkarni	Moderator
Tea	Served at Venue	0400
Quick Updates/ Experience Sharing	Shailendra Singh	0400-0410

Presentation (Effective Education) PP	Abdhesh Gangwar	0410-0420
Follow-up Discussion	Participants	0420-0500
Special Session 10: Academics/ Taxonomy etc in the Freshwater Turtle Conservation	I Das/ Peter Prashag (Moderators)	0500-0530
Dinner at Coffee Shop		0730 onwards
Workshop Steering Committee Meeting	Brian Horne (Moderator)	0700-0800
Turtle Conservation Program Field Representatives meet		1100-1200 PM
Day III(241010) Saturday		
Session 11: Turtle/ Wetland Conservation Socio-economic Issues	Indraneil Das	Moderator
Updates/ Experience Sharing	Bhasker M. Dixit (Not Present)	830-840
Tackling Socio-economic and livelihood challenges for the conservation of freshwater turtles and ecosystems	Neelam Rana & Mayukh Hazara	840-0900
Discussion	Participants	0900-1000
Tea Break		1000-1030
Special Session 12: Wrap-up Session	Rick Hudson	Chair
Recap of Meeting and Finalisation of Recommendations (PP)	Brain D Horne and Indraneil Das	1030-1130
Effective implementation of the present recommendations	BC Choudhury	1130-1145
Turtle Conservation Award and Appreciation Announcement & Presentation (PP)	Shailendra Singh	1145-1200
Future Directions & Seed Grants for Indian Turtle Conservation	Rick Hudson	1200-1210
Vote of Thanks	Patrick Aust	1210-1220
Technical Meeting closed and Lunch and checkout		1220-0100
ITCP Program Development Meeting	Program partners, by invitation only	0600-0700 PM
	*PP: Power point Presentation	

Annexure 2: List of the Attendees

Name	Institution	Designation
BK Patnaik	Uttar Pradesh Forest Department	PCCF (Wildlife)
Shailendra Singh	TSA/MCBT Indian Turtle Conservation Prog	Prog. Director
Indraneil Das	Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, University Malaysia Sarawak	Professor
Patrick Aust	Madras Crocodile Bank Trust	Director
Gowri Mallapur	Madras Crocodile Bank Trust	Veterinarian
V. Deepak	Wildlife Institute of India	Research Fellow
Nikhil Whitaker	Madras Crocodile Bank Trust	Curator
Madan Krishna Suwal	Companions for Amphibians and Reptiles of Nepal (CARON)	President
Sudam Pani	Green India	Secretary
Binod C.Choudhury	Wildlife Institute of India	Scientist
R.P.S. Lubana	CESD	Secretary
Rupali Ghosh	TSA -Bangladesh	Researcher
Peter Praschag B.H.	Turtle Rescue Centre	Turtle Biologist
Channakeshava Murthy	Zoological Survey of India	Scientist-C
Raju Vyas	Sajaji Baug Zoo	Zoo Inspector
Sunil K Choudhary	T.M.Bhagalpur University	Professor
Khem Bahadur Bhaduaria	Indian Turtle Conservation Program	Education Officer
Sanjay Molur	Zoo Outreach Organization	Executive Director Evaluation & Monitoring Officer
Brij Kishor Gupta	Central Zoo Authority (Ministry of Env. & Forests)	Secretary
Dhruvajyoti Basu	Katerniaghat Foundation	
Abrar Ahmed	TRAFFIC India	
Jeffrey W. Lang	Madras Crocodile Bank Trust	Researcher
Brian D. Horne	Zoological Society of San Diego	Researcher
Mayukh Hajra	Development Alternatives	Executive Environmental Scientist
Neelam Rana	Development Alternatives	
Shaswat Sirsi	TSA/MCBT Indian Turtle Conservation Prog	Researcher
Sheena Koeth	Cleveland Metro park Zoo	Veterinary Technician Research Range Officer
R.K. Sharma	National Chambal Sanctuary	
P.P. Khandelwal	Anant Prakash Foundation	
Abdhesht Gangwar	Centre for Environmental Education	Regional Director
Rick Hudson	Turtle Survival Alliance	Chairman
Renan Aufray	Awely (www.awely.org)	Project officer
Samir Whitaker	Madras Crocodile Bank Trust	Asst. Director
Chittaranjan Baruah	Zoology Department, Gauhati University	Research Associate
Yashwant	Gharial & Turtle Rehabilitation Centre	Range Officer
S.P. Singh	Gharial & Turtle Rehabilitation Centre	Range Officer
Eva Sharma	Endangered Species Program	Conservator
KK Jha	Wildlife Division, UP Forest Department	Chief Conservator Deputy Chief Wildlife Warden
Manish Mittal	Wildlife Division, UP Forest Department	
Pratibha Singh	UP State Biodiversity Board	Director
Shruti Bajpayee	Indian Turtle Conservation Workshop	Event Manager

Neelam Shivnath	University of Lucknow' Zoology Department	Master Student
Pradeep Saxena	Terai Environmental Foundation	Director
R. Suresh Kumar	Wildlife Institute of India	Scientist
Nirmal Kulkarni	Mhadei Research Centre, Goa, India	Convener
Abdul Kalam	Centre for Environmental Education	Project Officer
Ashutosh Tripathi	TSA/MCBT Indian Turtle Conservation Programme	Sr. Project Officer
RK Shukla	Avadh Jan Kalyan Sansthan	Secretary
WH Siqqiqui	Nature Activist	Activist
Arunima Singh	University of Lucknow's Zoology Department	Master Student



Mr BK Patnaik, PCCF, Wildlife, Uttar Pradesh, delivering inaugural speech