



TURTLE SURVIVAL ALLIANCE

AN IUCN PARTNERSHIP NETWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF FRESHWATER TURTLES AND TORTOISES

Monday, June 9, 2008 - TSA Update

>>> 1) Call for TSA Newsletter submissions - message from Rick Hudson

The next TSA magazine is currently being compiled. We need short news articles on any successful captive breeding examples that you deem significant. For submission guidelines please contact [Rick Hudson](#).

>>> 2) TSA Announces Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF) award for India - message from Rick Hudson

The DWCF recently announced a \$17,900 grant to the Turtle Survival Alliance for their Indian Turtle Conservation Program. TSA's India program is a joint initiative spearheaded by the TSA in partnership with the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust/Center for Herpetology (MCBT/CFH) and the Zoological Society of San Diego's 'Conservation and Research for Endangered Species' (CRES) center. The flagship species for this program is the critically endangered red crowned roof turtle, Batagur (Kachuga) kachuga. With less than 500 adult females remaining in the wild, there is an urgent need to implement conservation measures to prevent its extinction. Efforts are focused within the National Chambal River Sanctuary (NCRS), a 400-kilometer tributary of the Ganges River drainage and the last stronghold for the red crowned roof turtle. Current conservation measures for the red crowned roof turtle include protection of field-collected nests from predators at in situ and ex situ hatcheries. A portion of the hatchlings are retained at two modest nurseries until they reach a size that will improve their chances of survival when released into the wild – a program referred to as headstarting.



Written by Brian Horne (CRES) and TSA India Program Coordinator Shailendra Singh, this grant provides funding for both a research and an education component. Research activities are aimed at determining TSD patterns to insure both sexes are produced at the hatcheries, gaining a better understanding of frequency and minimum size of reproduction, and monitoring population trends and survival by surveys and mark/recapture studies. The research component of this program will improve the chances of conserving the turtles, yet illegal fishing within the sanctuary must also be addressed. If turtles continue to drown in illegal nets, no amount of headstarting activities will prevent the extinction of the species. Conservation Village Meetings and local outreach activities to educate locals to the situation within the NCRS will be essential. Pilot alternative livelihood initiatives will try and find the most feasible economic options for reforming turtle poachers and illegal fishermen. A large-scale education awareness program will be launched for communities living within and on the border of the NCRS that will help garner greater support and participation in turtle nest protection, rearing, and headstarting. The humble education center at Garhaita will be expanded so that larger awareness meetings can be held and school groups better accommodated. Over 200 village schools are in close enough proximity to Garhaita to be serviced by the expanded education center.

Both Shai and Brian will be giving presentations on their work in India at the upcoming TSA conference in Tucson.

>>> 3) TSA Indian Turtle Conservation Program coordinator wins 2008 Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund Hero Award

The DWCF just announced that Shailendra Singh, the TSA/MCBT Indian Turtle Conservation Program coordinator,

was one of 11 recipients of the 2008 Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund Hero Awards.

The following is taken from the MCBT press release:

Working tirelessly under harsh conditions in the rugged Chambal river valley, Shailendra spearheads the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust/Turtle Survival Alliance's (MCBT/TSA) Fresh-water Turtle Conservation Programme to ensure the future of wild turtles in their natural habitat.

Shailendra Singh, a young scientist working with the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust hails from the tiny village of Jerwal Road near Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. His interest in turtles started when, as a young boy of nine, he acquired two Tent turtles "Tom and Tinky". His observations of the turtles in captivity fuelled his interest to observe them in their natural environment. He then started looking for wild turtles to study, incurring his mother's wrath when he cut up his new mosquito net to fish for turtles !!



Shai's decision to pursue a career in wildlife conservation met with great opposition from his parents. After completing B.Sc. and M.Sc. courses he volunteered with local NGO groups and then at the Kukrail Turtle and Gharial Breeding Centre. Inspired by the work of Rom Whitaker and encouraged by Mr. D. Basu he grabbed the offer to work for Turtle conservation with the Madras Crocodile Bank.

Over the last four years he has achieved a great deal. Under the MCBT-TSA Turtle Project Shailendra helped develop a small turtle headstarting facility, the Garhaita Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, near Etawah, and a second headstarting facility at Deori. He also oversaw the production of Batagur kachuga hatchlings and Batagur dhongoka hatchlings from in-situ riverside hatcheries within the National Chambal Sanctuary. The majority of the hatchlings were released into the Chambal River while some were reared at the headstarting facilities.

Shailendra has also been very active in community education and awareness and environmental stewardship, as well as afforestation programmes. He has used personal funds to conduct workshops for school children on the importance of conserving biodiversity within National Chambal Sanctuary. These small workshops have now led to thousands of children visiting the Garhaita Turtle Rehabilitation Centre annually. He has also conducted surveys on the turtle trade in India and collaborated on producing a documentary film with support from the British High Commission, on the plight of turtles in India, highlighting the illegal trade for food markets and the pet trade.

Shailendra is also actively fund raising to further increase the capacity of the headstarting facilities which he envisions as a model "green" turtle conservation project with bio-filtration and solar/wind driven pumping systems maximizing energy and water efficiency.

His commitment to conservation is an inspiration to us all.

Shai's humble response follows:

Dear All,

I am at a loss for words to express my great joy not so much for having been chosen for the "Disney Conservation Hero Award" as at your expression of joy that you have so liberally showered on me through your congratulatory notes and facilitations. I don't know if my almost insignificant contribution to conservation really merited the honor that has been bestowed on me but I do know that whatever I did, was a sustained stream of inspiration and cooperation, I have always received from you and I am sure this positive encouragement will hopefully lead me onto achieve some lasting goals in the field of nature conservation.

Many thanks for your support, encouragement and cooperation.

High regards,
Shailendra

>>> **4) More news on Rafetus in China** - message from Rick Hudson

The big news from China is that the female Rafetus came up on the sand beach and began digging yesterday, but we are not sure if she laid or not. Our team representative in China, Lu Shunqing (WCS) will go to Suzhou Zoo on 7 June to check. Meanwhile the incubators have been shipped to China and we are trying to track them now. Gerald Kuchling heads back June 15 – 29th and we will keep you posted as this exciting story unfolds.

Click the link for some [Media News](#) from a London newspaper.

>>> **5) TSA's first Training Scholarship Program is underway** - message from Rick Hudson

On June 3 two very tired and weary travelers from Myanmar (formerly Burma) arrived at Baltimore Washington airport, after a long flight from Yangon to New York. Myo Myo (a female) and Kyaw Moe (male) are the first students to participate in the TSA's Training Scholarship Program. Both are employed by WCS's Myanmar Turtle Conservation Program which receives support and funding from the TSA. The WCS/TSA Turtle Team is an active and hard working group, focusing their efforts primarily on conservation and research of the critically endangered Burmese roofed turtle, *Batagur (Kakchuga) trivittata*. Other priorities are breeding programs for Myanmar endemic species including Burmese star tortoise and the Arakan forest turtles, and handling confiscations of priority species such as Asian mountain tortoises. Kyaw Moe is stationed primarily on the remote upper Chindwin River working on the roofed turtle recovery project, while Myo Myo is based in WCS's Yangon office and handles multiple responsibilities. She has received several grants to survey for new wild populations of *B. trivittata* in recent years, and participated in TSA's second chelonian husbandry training workshop in Hong Kong in 2005.



Myo Myo and Kyaw Moe will be in the U.S. for the entire Summer, wrapping up at the TSA annual conference in Tucson in September. The core of their training experience will be two months under Dr Willem Roosenberg, starting at the Patuxent River Diamondback Terrapin Project and then spending time at other sites in Maryland and Ohio. They will undergo a rigorous training program designed to make them better turtle research biologists with the ability and confidence to study turtles in their home country. They will learn basic survey skills to study turtles in three different systems as well as radio telemetry, blood sampling, tissue sampling, and database management. Then beginning in August they will spend two weeks with Dr. Peter Pritchard at the Chelonian Research Institute in Oviedo Florida, then on to Ray Ashton's for gopher tortoise experience. Other opportunities in Florida, New York and possibly California will complete their format training, which will conclude at the TSA conference in Tucson in September.

>>> **6) 6th Annual Symposium on Conservation and Biology of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles** - message from Lonnie McCaskill

Have you signed up for the conference yet? [CLICK HERE](#) for registration information and links.

Bringing your spouse? Bringing your family? See if they might enjoy an off-site activity [HERE](#).

>>> **7) The TSA wishes to graciously acknowledge the following recent contributions** - message from Rick Hudson

Without the continuing support of our members and donors, the TSA would not be able to maintain our commitment

to "Zero Turtle Extinctions in the 21st Century". Thank you for helping the TSA to become an effective force for global turtle conservation.

Denver Zoo - \$450

Karrie Chen - \$600

Emily Rhine - \$500

Brett and Nancy Stearns - \$1000 toward the Behler Turtle Conservation Award and the 2008 TSA Annual Conference

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