

Conservation news

First record of the spotted pond turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* in Shuklaphanta National Park, Nepal



Eleven species of turtles of the family Geomydidae are known from Nepal (Rai et al., 2022, *Arco-Nepal Newsletter*, 3–23), including the spotted pond turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii*, which also occurs in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, and is categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. In the most recent list of the herpetofauna of Shuklaphanta National Park in Sudoorpaschim Province, four species of Geomydidae were documented (Rawat et al., 2020, *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, 12, 15587–15611), not including the spotted pond turtle. The spotted pond turtle is heavily traded, and illegal trafficking is the greatest threat to its existence. The seizure of more than 10,000 illegally traded individuals during 2014–2016 (Leupen, 2018, *Black Spotted Turtle in Asia II: A Seizure Analysis (2014–2016)*, TRAFFIC) indicates the severity of this threat.

The spotted pond turtle is easily recognized by the white spots on its black neck, its black carapace with three prominent keels, and yellow spots on the iris. It inhabits both rivers and lakes. On 30 October 2023, a single spotted pond turtle was observed by author KRB during an anti-poaching patrol in the National Park, near the Bahuni river. It was not captured or otherwise disturbed, and photographs were taken from a distance. This observation highlights the importance of regular monitoring and improved reporting among stakeholders, given the illegal trade of the species. We also recommend public outreach for its conservation and targeted species conservation actions, to inform



Spotted pond turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* from the Bahuni river, Shuklaphanta National Park, Nepal. Photo: Kavi Raj Bohara.

management interventions and mitigate illegal trade threat challenges.

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