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NOTE

FIRST DISTRIBUTION RECORD OF ELONGATED TORTOISE *INDOTESTUDO ELONGATA* (BLYTH, 1853) (REPTILIA: TESTUDINES: TESTUDINIDAE) FROM BIHAR, INDIA

Arif, Sourabh Verma, Ayesha Mohammad Maslehuddin, Uttam, Ambarish Kumar Mall, Gaurav Ojha & Hemkant Roy

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First distribution record of Elongated Tortoise *Indotestudo elongata* (Blyth, 1853) (Reptilia: Testudines: Testudinidae) from Bihar, India

Arif¹ , Sourabh Verma² , Ayesha Mohammad Maslehuddin³ , Uttam⁴ , Ambarish Kumar Mall⁵ ,
Gaurav Ojha⁶ & Hemkant Roy⁷

^{1,2,5,6,7} Valmiki Tiger Reserve, West Champaran, Bettiah, Bihar 845438, India.

^{3,4} Department of Wildlife Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh 202002, India.

¹arifsiddiqui329@gmail.com (corresponding author), ²sourabhvermabhu@gmail.com, ³ayesha.wildlife@gmail.com,

⁴chaudharyuttam2@gmail.com, ⁵dfo1vtr@gmail.com, ⁶dfobettiah2@gmail.com, ⁷fdvalmikitr@gmail.com

India has one of the most diverse chelonian fauna in the world; home to 30 species of freshwater turtles and tortoises and six marine turtles (Das & Gupta 2015). There are a total of five species of tortoises reported from India, viz.: *Indotestudo elongata* Elongated Tortoise, *Manoria emys* Asian Giant Tortoise, *Indotestudo travancorica* Travancore Tortoise, *Geochelone elegans* Indian Star Tortoise, and *Manouria impressa* Impressed Tortoise (Das & Gupta 2015; Kundu et al. 2013, 2018). The former two are listed as Critically Endangered and the later three as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Indotestudo elongata which is listed as Critically Endangered under criterion A2cd (Rahman et al. 2019) by IUCN Red List and under Appendix II of CITES is protected under Schedule IV of Wildlife Protection Act 1972 in India (Das & Gupta 2015; Ihlw et al. 2016). This species is also commonly known as Yellow-headed Tortoise, Yellow Tortoise, Red-nosed Tortoise, and Pineapple Tortoise and is widely distributed across southern and southeastern Asia (Das & Gupta 2015; Rahman et al. 2019). In India, it was first recorded by Anderson (1878–79) near Chaibasa in Singhbhum District of present day Jharkhand

State from where later Annandale (1913) collected a specimen of it and described it as *Testudo parallelus*. In 1983, Edward O. Moll collected two shells from south-west of Chaibasa (Crumly 1988; Swingland & Klemens 1989). There are records of *Indotestudo elongata* from Corbett National Park in Uttar Pradesh and Jalpaiguri situated in West Bengal also (Frazier 1992). In the east it is found at Dampa Tiger Reserve and Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary in Mizoram, Chakrashilla Wildlife Sanctuary in Dhubri District in Assam and Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi districts of Barak Valley, Assam (Das & Gupta 2015). Our sighting is the first record of *Indotestudo elongata* from the present state of Bihar. However, recent publication of Khan et al. (2020) emphasis there were high probability occurrence of the species in the central Himalaya and the Upper Gangetic Plains including Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar on the basis of environmental niche modelling method, too.

While on routine patrol of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve a tortoise was sighted on 05 June 2019 and 27 June 2019 in the Manguraha range (Image 1) that was subsequently identified as *Indotestudo elongata* based on descriptions in Tikader & Sharma (1985), Ahmed &

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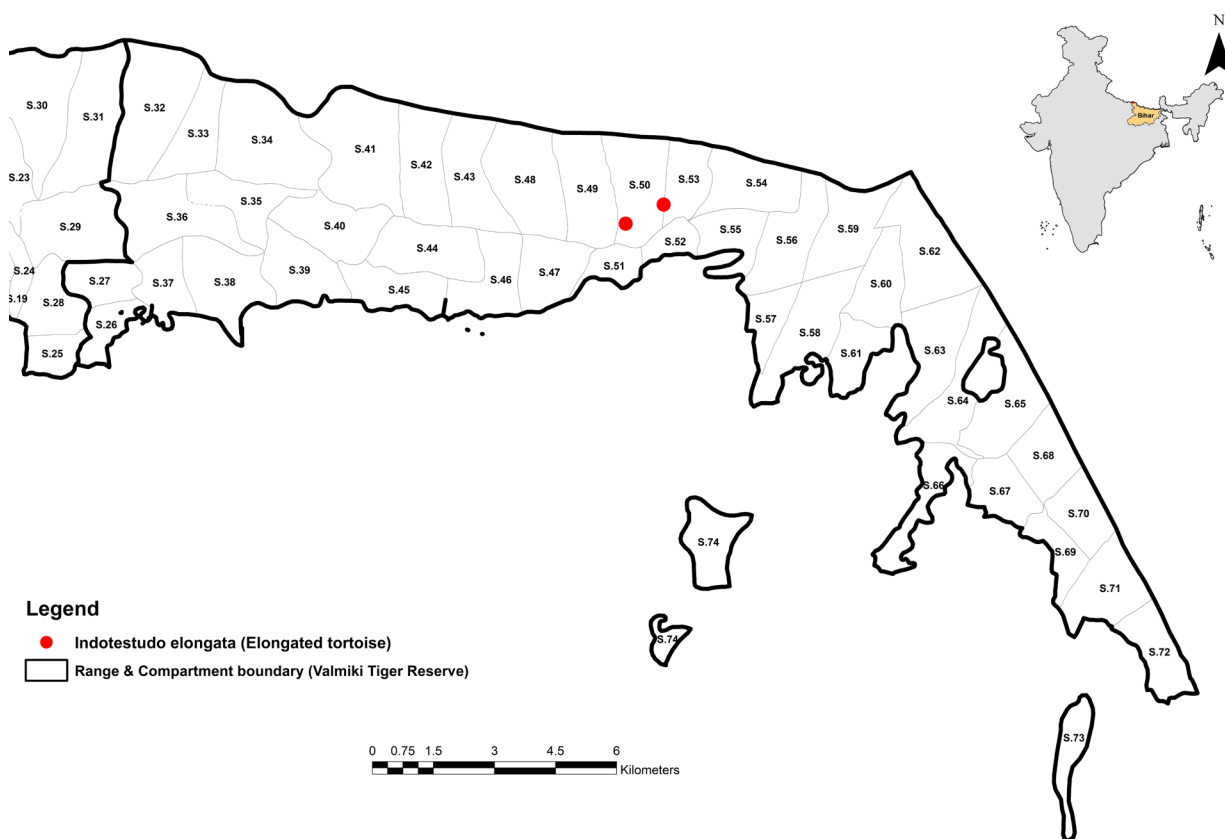


Figure 1. Manguraha range in Valmiki Tiger Reserve showing site of occurrence of *Indotestudo elongata*.



Image 1. *Indotestudo elongata* found on 5 June 2019 & 27 June 2019 in Manguraha Range, Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar. © Arif.

Das (2010) and Ihlow et al. (2016). The closest published locality record for this species is in Chaibasa situated in West Singhbhum District of current day Jharkhand (Annandale 1913; Swingland & Klemens 1989), which is approximately 615km from Manguraha.

The first sighting took place around 08.27h (27.328°N, 84.561°E) and the second at 08.50h (27.324°N, 84.551°E) in an area of moist deciduous forest dominated by *Sal Shorea robusta* and Indian Laurel *Terminalia elliptica* trees. Both the sighted individuals were male and were sighted sitting at the location. The elongated carapace and plastron of the sighted individual was yellowish-brown in colour with distinct black blotches in the centre of each scute as described by Blyth (1884) and Ihlow et al. (2016). The sizes of the individuals were 21cm and 29cm and weighed 2kg and 2.9kg, respectively.

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