

Red-crowned roofed turtle (Batagur kachuga)

Prelims (GS I) - Current events of national and international importance| General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change.

Mains (GS I) - Conservation

Why in news?

After 30 years, 20 critically endangered red-crowned roofed turtles were reintroduced to the Ganga under Namami Gange Mission.

- The red-crowned roofed turtle is a **freshwater turtle species**.



- **Distribution** - It is native to India, Bangladesh and Nepal.
- The species was widespread in the Ganga River, both in India and Bangladesh and it also occurs in the Brahmaputra basin.
- Substantial population of the species are found only in the National Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary.
- **Appearance** - The shells of these turtles can be as long as 56 cm and can weigh up to 25 kg.
- The males are shorter and reach only half the length of females.
- **Habitat** - Found in deep flowing rivers with terrestrial nesting sites.
- **Diet** - Exclusively of water plants.
- **Threats** - The turtles are at a high risk of extinction.
 - Habitat loss due to pollution and hydrological projects specific in the Gangal lowlands of northern India and Bangladesh.
 - Overharvesting the animal for illegal consumption and
 - Illegal international trade.
- **Conservation**
 - IUCN - Critically Endangered
 - IWPA - Schedule I
 - CITES - currently Appendix II (India proposed to move it to Appendix II)

Decline of Red-crowned Roofed turtle

- The species were last documented in Ganga River by Rao in 1993.
- No viable populations of the species turtle found in entire Ganga system in last three decades.

Reintroduction Program

- 20 turtles were released into Haiderpur Wetland from Garhaita Turtle Conservation Center (National Chambal Sanctuary, UP).
- All turtles tagged with sonic devices for monitoring.
- The turtles were divided into two groups for Effective survival of the turtles,
 - One group was released above the barrage of Haiderpur Wetland.
 - While the other was released downstream in the main channel of the Ganga.

Haiderpur Wetland, located in western Uttar Pradesh, India, was designated as a Ramsar site in April 2021.

References

1. [WII| Red Crowned Roofed Turtle](#)
2. [Hindustan Times| Red-crowned roofed turtles return to Ganga](#)

