

# Asian Giant Tortoise Reintroduction: Environment

The Asian Giant Tortoise (*Manouria emys*), the largest tortoise species in mainland Asia, is listed as *Endangered* under the IUCN Red List due to habitat loss and poaching. Conservation efforts in Northeast India focus on captive breeding, habitat restoration, and community-based protection. Asian Giant Tortoise Reintroduction – Nagaland

## Recent Development

10 Asian Giant Tortoises reintroduced into Zeliang Community Reserve, Nagaland.

Organisers: Nagaland Forest Department + India Turtle Conservation Programme (ITCP). Tortoises bred & head-started at Nagaland Zoological Park. Soft-released with Very High Frequency (VHF) tags **for** post-release monitoring. VHF Technology Range 30–300 MHz in the electromagnetic spectrum. Used for wildlife tracking and monitoring.

## Asian Giant Tortoise (*Manouria emys*)

1. Status: Largest land tortoise in mainland Asia.
2. Nickname: "Small elephant of the forest" – due to its size & ecological role.
3. Habitat Range: Tropical & subtropical forests – India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia.
4. Distribution in India: Historically in Northeast India, especially Nagaland & Arunachal Pradesh.
5. Longevity: 80–100 years.
6. Diet: Herbivorous – feeds on leaves, fruits, mushrooms, decomposing plant matter.
7. Ecological Role: Keystone species – crucial for seed dispersal, soil turnover, forest regeneration. Loss of keystone species can cause ecosystem imbalance or collapse.

### Conservation Status

1. IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered.
2. CITES: Appendix II.
3. Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule IV.

## India Turtle Conservation Programme (ITCP)

Initiative under Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), formed in 2001. Focus Area, Ganga–Brahmaputra plains – turtles, Gangetic dolphins, crocodilians, and their habitats.

### Activities

1. Conservation & habitat protection.
2. Community outreach & education.
3. Research & monitoring.

## Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA)

Established in 2001, in response to the Asian Turtle Crisis. The Mission was "Zero turtle extinctions in the 21st century."

### Three-pronged strategy

1. Restore wild populations – habitat protection, field research.
2. Secure species in captivity – breeding programs.
3. Empower communities – local stewardship & conservation training.

## Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation – India (TSAFI)

Established in 2016 as Indian arm of TSA. Work Field projects, research, and community engagement for India's endemic & endangered turtles.

### Zeliang Community

1. Tribe: Zeliang – subgroups include Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei.
2. Location: Peren district, Nagaland.

**Culture**

1. Practice jhum (shifting) cultivation.
2. Celebrate Hega festival.

**Conservation Role**

1. Actively conserve forests via community reserves.
2. Local youths trained as 'tortoise guardians' to protect species & collect data.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nagaland/largest-asian-tortoise-species-reintroduced-into-nagaland-community-reserve/article69893678.ece>

