



drishti

Temples and Turtle Conservation

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Conservation program for turtles is being implemented in Assam by involving the network of temples across the State.

- Species that have disappeared in the wild are bred in Assam's shrines before being released into the wild.
 - A certain **degree of faith attached to turtles** along with the involvement of the **local community** has helped them survive in temple ponds.
 - However, the **temple ponds have more turtles** than they can sustain and lack egg laying space because of so-called beautification of these ponds with concrete boundary.
- Besides, temple turtles are fed **non-natural food** such as bread and wheat balls, which **alters their biology**.
- India hosts 28 species of turtles, of which 20 are found in Assam.
- Major threats are consumption of turtle meat and eggs, silt mining, encroachment of wetlands and changes in flooding patterns.
- Few important turtle species are:
 - **Black Softshell Turtle (Nilssonina Nigricans)**
 - **Indian Roofed Turtle (Pangshura Tecta)**