

Ministry of Jal Shakti



Unique Success of the Namami Gange Mission: The Return of the Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle to the Ganga After Three Decades

This initiative marks a historic step in the Ganga's ecosystem

The return of the endangered Turtle species becomes a
beacon of hope for biodiversity conservation in Ganga

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The Ganga River, which has been an integral part of Indian civilization for centuries, is now igniting the possibility of new life along its banks. Once home to endangered turtle species, the Ganga's shores have now become a symbol of positive change in the direction of biodiversity conservation. This transformation is particularly evident in the return of the endangered Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle to the waters of the Ganga, a species that had previously seen a continuous decline in its population. This new hope in the Ganga's waters is not only a significant step for these ancient creatures but also for the restoration of the entire ecosystem.



Impact of the Namami Gange Mission

Supported from Namami Gange, TSAFI project team conducted detailed assessment of turtle diversity and abundance of Haiderpur Wetland Complex (HWC) in 2020 followed by Habitat Evaluation study on newly formed turtle sanctuary near Prayagraj along Ganges in Uttar Pradesh in 2022. Study along HWC suggested the presence of 9 turtle species whereas indirect evidence of 5 turtle species was gathered in Prayagraj. One of the most astounding findings of above and prior studies was that none of the viable population or individuals of Red-crowned Roofed turtle (RRT) *Batagur kachuga* were sighted or reported from the entire Ganga. The findings suggested that this was the most endangered species of entire North India, particularly Uttar Pradesh. Rao (1993) has seen a couple of specimens of this species above and below Bijnore barrage. In the last 30 years there was no confirmed report of any adult from the main channel of Ganga.



Historic Efforts in Turtle Reintroduction

On April 26, 2025, 20 turtles were carefully transferred from the Garhaita Turtle Conservation Center located within and under supervision of National Chambal Sanctuary, UP and released into the Haiderpur Wetland. These turtles were tagged with sonic devices to monitor their safety and migration. For the reintroduction process, the turtles were divided into two groups – one group was released above the barrage of the Haiderpur Wetland, while the other was released downstream in the main channel of the Ganga. This approach aims to determine which method is more effective for the turtles' reintroduction.



Way Forward: Restoration of Biodiversity

This initiative marks a historic step in the Ganga's ecosystem. During the monsoon season, the Haiderpur Wetland will completely connect with the main channel of the Ganga, allowing the turtles to disperse at their own pace. Over the next two years, the tracking and monitoring of these turtles will be conducted. This is the first attempt at reintroducing this species into the Ganga, following a 'soft' versus 'hard' release strategy. The goal is to establish the species' population in the Ganga in a stable manner with active assistance from the UP Forest Department.



Message of the Success of the Namami Gange Mission

This important initiative will not only conserve turtle species but will also inspire the improvement of the ecosystem in Uttar Pradesh. The conservation effort for the Ganga has shown that if all stakeholders work together, even significant challenges can be overcome. The Namami Gange Mission's initiative has become an inspiration not only in making the Ganga cleaner but also in restoring biodiversity and the ecosystem.



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