

Indian Freshwater Turtles

Conservation / Threat Status of Turtles

Part 2

Many turtles, terrapins and tortoises are threatened with extinction, that is, dying out completely.

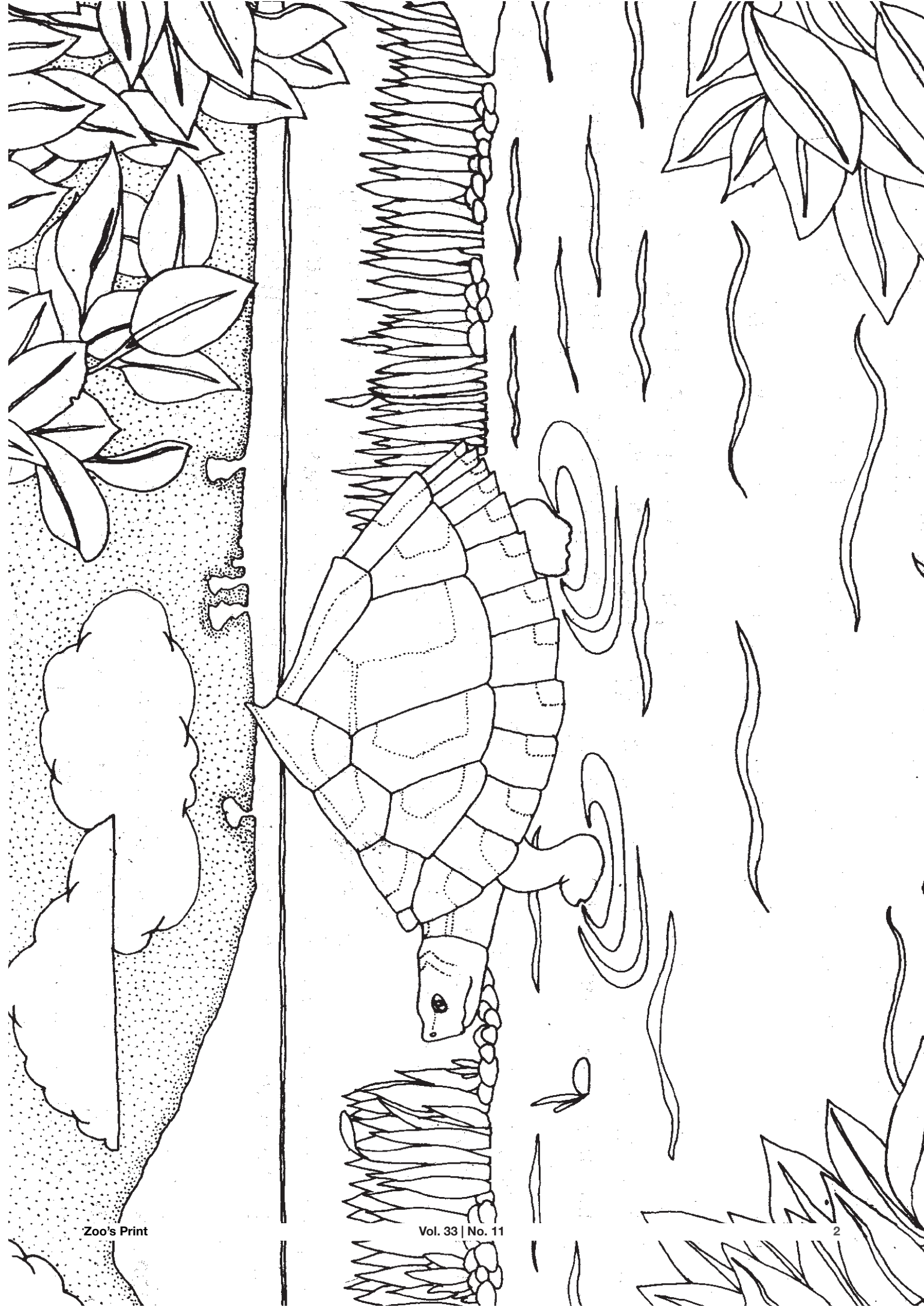
The Asian Turtle Crisis - facts

- Z Turtles have never had it so bad !
- Z Turtles as a group are called “chelonians” by scientists (Chee - low - nee - ans)
- Z Turtles have lived on earth longer than dinosaurs
- Z Turtles of many species all over the world have been in trouble for years- habitat destruction, pollution, human disturbance ... but
- Z Turtles today are most threatened due to the Chinese demand for turtles for food
- Z South-East Asian and southern China turtles are most affected
- Z South Asian turtles are also in trade, even now, mainly for pets but also for shell and for food

What you can do

- Z Do not eat turtles. Most of them are becoming rare in the wild because we are catching too many of them
- Z Tell others not to eat turtles. Grown-ups may not know that it is not right to eat them. Eating of turtle meat is also not allowed by our government in India.
- Z When on a holiday, do not buy articles that are made from turtles, such as masks, drinks and medicines. Each item probably represents atleast one dead turtle.
- Z Read as much as you can about them and see them in zoos, aquariums, and -best of all- in the wild.

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Assam Roofed Turtle

Pangshura sylhetensis (Jerdon, 1870)

Endangered
globally

Assam Roofed Turtle is found in hill streams and low-lying marshes in north-eastern India and also in Bangladesh. Little is known about its habits.

This turtle is i) a prominent spike-like projection on the upper shell ii) a saw-like edged back of the shell iii) very rarely seen, smallish turtle with 20cm average shell length, with males much smaller than females.

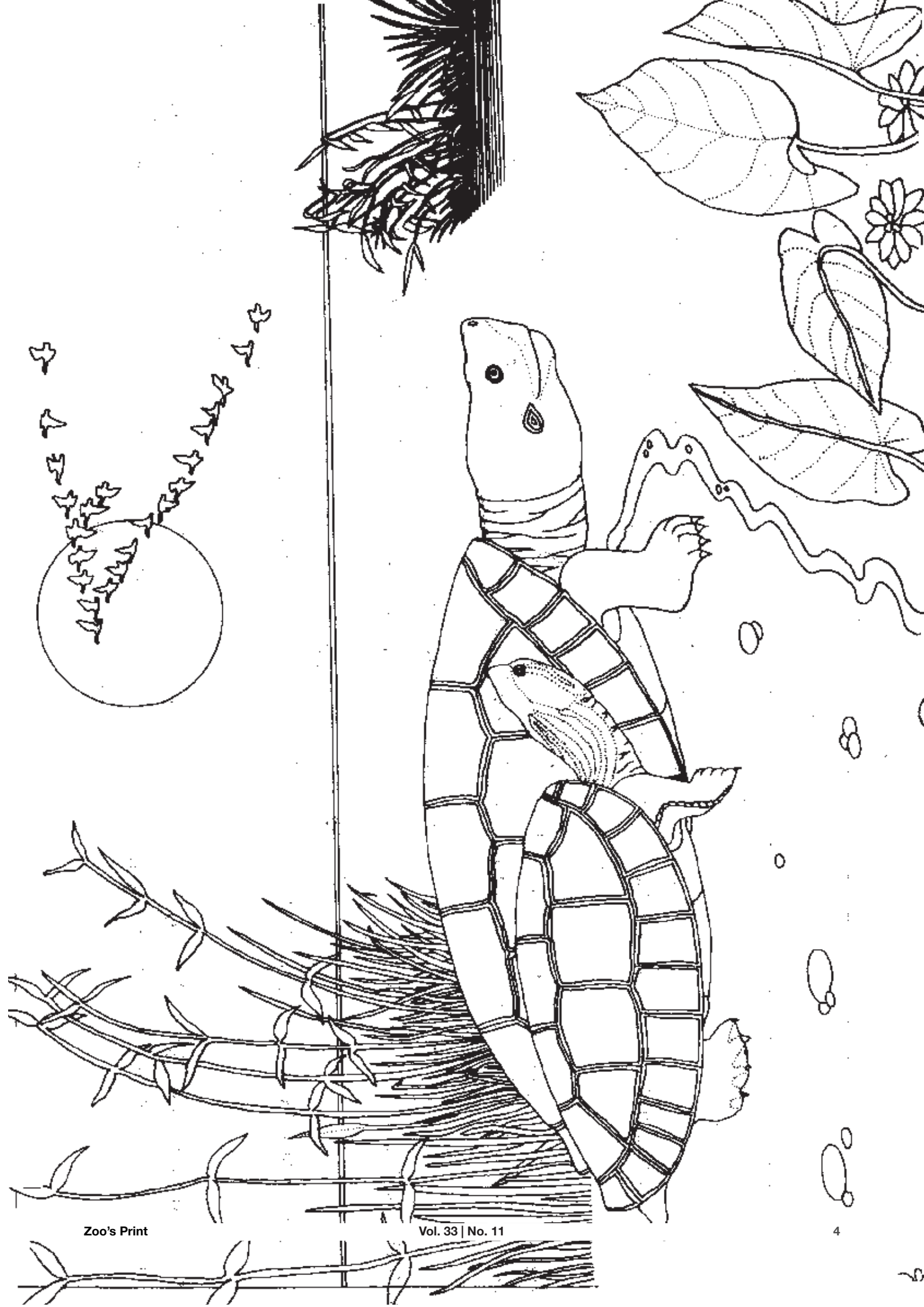
It is very shy in captivity, hiding during the day. In captivity, one little turtle was known to eat fishes, but refused vegetables.

DANGER: When we cut trees in the hills, streams that come from these hills dry up and this spells DANGER to the Assam Roofed Turtles as well as many other plants and animals that live in the hills of north-eastern India.

Colouring Instruction: The shell of the Assam Roofed Turtle is greenish-brown, the spike on top light brown. The lines running along it could be coloured either red or yellow.

Local names:

Bengali: *Kath kathua/Sylhet kori kathua*



Red-crowned Roofed Turtle

Batagur kachuga (Gray, 1831)

Critically
Endangered
globally

Red-crowned Roofed Turtle is native to Bangladesh, India and Nepal. It spends most of its time in water but basks on banks, on logs and rocks, during the months of March and April.

This turtle is i) most brightly coloured of all ii) adult males have a red forehead, blue cheeks, red lines on the neck & yellow areas on the face iii) females have a dull brown head iv) it grows up to 56cm in shell length but males are smaller than females.

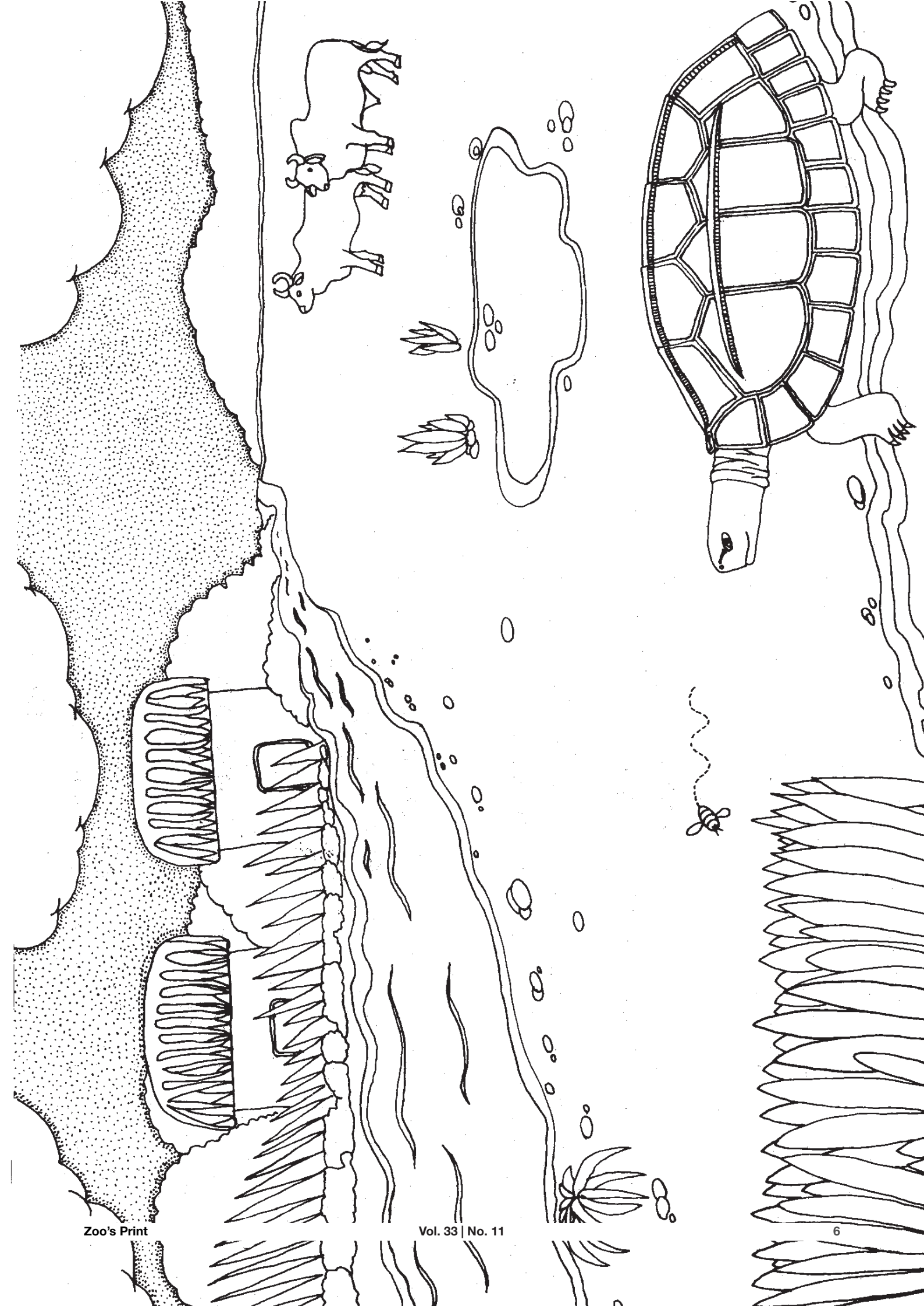
The Red-crowned Roofed Turtle feeds on plants, but that is about all that is known of what it eats in the wild. In captivity, it takes both vegetables and fruits. It lays 8-31 eggs at a time, during March and April, on the bank of rivers.

DANGER: It is in danger because humans catch it for food and construct dams, which stops it from moving from feeding to resting areas.

Colouring Instruction: The big female has a brown head, although its jaws are yellow. The small male has a red forehead and neck stripes with blue behind the eyes and the rest of head and neck is yellow. Shells are brown or grey.

Local names:

Bengali: *Adi kori katha*; **Hindi:** *Lal tilakwala/Sal*



Rock Terrapin

Melanochelys trijuga (Schweigger, 1812)

Near
Threatened
globally

Rock Terrapin is found throughout India, and even outside in Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka. It is completely absent from the extreme north, north-west and central regions, which are either too hot or too cool for these terrapin.

This terrapin has i) red or orange spots on the head, a yellow net-like pattern, a dark spear-shaped mark or a dark diamond-shaped mark ii) medium-sized, its shell about 39cm long iii) terrapin has a smell, which it releases from special glands near its legs if you disturb it iv) may lay 3-7 eggs at a time, a long distance from water.

The Rock Terrapin spends most of the day sleeping or otherwise inactive, waking up after the sun goes down, to go looking for food which includes grass, fruits, snails, prawns and the larvae of insects. This terrapin has many enemies such as monitor lizards.

DANGER: This terrapin is caught for food and rendered homeless because human beings fill up the small ponds which is its home.

Local names:

Gujarati: *Kala rang no kachabo*; Hindi: *Talao kachua*;
Kannada: *Murkate aame*; Khasia: *Dikar*; Marathi:
Kasav; Tamil: *Kal/Tanni amai*; Telugu: *Nuiye tabelu*