

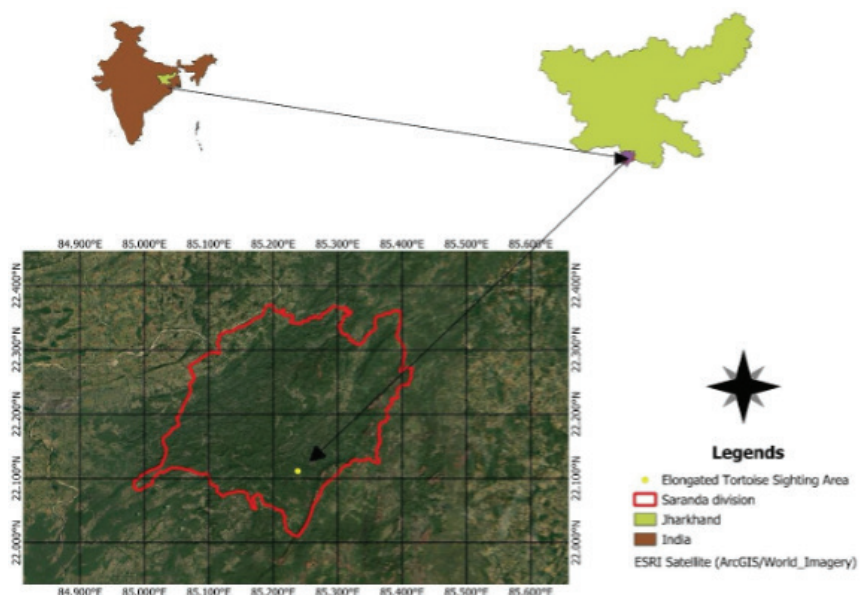


Rare sighting of Elongated Tortoise in Saranda Forest Division, Jharkhand

The Elongated Tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata* Blyth, 1854) is a medium-sized testudinid tortoise of South and Southeast Asia. It is currently listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List because of a precipitous population decline caused by habitat degradation, fire and overharvesting (Rahman et al., 2019), as well as being enlisted under Schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Appendix II of CITES.



In India, *I. elongata* is found in foothills of the Himalaya, in northeastern hill forests and Chota Nagpur Plateau (Smith 1931; Das 1995). Previously, some old records on the species were documented from Jharkhand and it was reported from places like Chaibasa and Saranda (Anandale, 1913; Das, 1998), but recent confirmations





are not frequent. Khan et al. (2020) predicted the potential distribution of *I. elongata* in the Indian subcontinent, and identified the Chota Nagpur Plateau as a suitable but inadequately protected site-clusters for its habitats.

In this context, I record one more sighting of *I. elongata* from Saranda Forest Division, West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. This report demonstrates the continued existence of the species in the area and emphasises the ecological significance of Saranda within its disjunct range. This observation is important considering the persistent threat of mining and habitat degradation, as well as that most of the expected suitable range located is outside protected areas (Khan et al., 2020). This sighting highlights the pressing need for active surveillance, habitat protection and community based public awareness programs in Jharkhand to preserve populations of *I. elongata*. These local-scale data provide essential updates to broader distributional studies (Ihlow et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2020), and inform where conservation for this imperiled species should be prioritized.

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