

Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle

Mauremys sinensis

Reptile

Scientific Name

Mauremys sinensis

Other Names

Golden Thread Turtle

Range

Taiwan, southern China and northern Vietnam

Habitat

Freshwater marshes, swamps, ponds and soft bottom canals.

Description

A medium-sized turtle with a reddish brown to black carapace outlined with yellow and a solid yellow plastron. The head, neck and webbed limbs are olive green with fine yellow stripes. Females are slightly larger than males.

Average Size

Length: 8 – 10 in.

Weight: 17.5 – 35 oz.

Lifespan

In the wild: Estimated at 20 years

In captivity: Up to 23 years

Diet

In the wild: Plants, snails, fly larvae and pupae and occasional terrestrial insects

In captivity: Mixed vegetables, prepared turtle chow and insects

Clutch Size

7 – 17 eggs

Incubation

4 months

Sexual Maturity

Males: When they reach 5 inches in diameter

Females: When they reach 7 inches in diameter

Predators

Dogs, small carnivores and humans; spiders will eat the eggs

Population Status

Endangered



Behavior

Although the Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle is considered an opportunistic omnivore (feeding on a variety of plant and animal matter), the composition of their diet alters between sexes and age groups. Mature females are more herbivorous and feed chiefly on large plants that grow along the banks of rivers, while males and young females are carnivorous and eat primarily aquatic snails, fly larvae and insects.

This species is fond of basking on rocks or partially submerged logs for the majority of the daytime hours when they are not foraging. They have an excellent sense of smell and acute eyesight that allows them to see both above and below the water. At the first sign of danger, the turtle will dive underwater and remain hidden until the threat has passed. The Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle is fairly social and will tolerate several other turtles and turtle species living nearby. Although there is always competition for food and mates, these turtles are neither aggressive nor territorial.

Reproduction and Breeding

There are no courtship rituals in this species and males simply mate with available females. However, there is often aggressive competition among males for breeding rights to those females, including biting and scratching. Females lay their eggs in a shallow nest along the edge of a waterway, usually between late March and early June. After a few months, the hatchlings use their beak-like mouths to crack open the shells and head to safety. Their shells are soft at this point and they are very vulnerable to predation; neither parent provides care or protection to the offspring.

Conservation

The survival of freshwater turtles in Asia is greatly threatened due to exploitation by humans for food, traditional medicine, pets and ornaments. According to some estimates, up to 15 million turtles are traded in the region each year. In addition, because this turtle prefers slow moving waterways with plenty of surrounding vegetation for protection, it is unable to adjust to the drastic environmental changes in its habitat caused by pollution, logging or damming of waterways.

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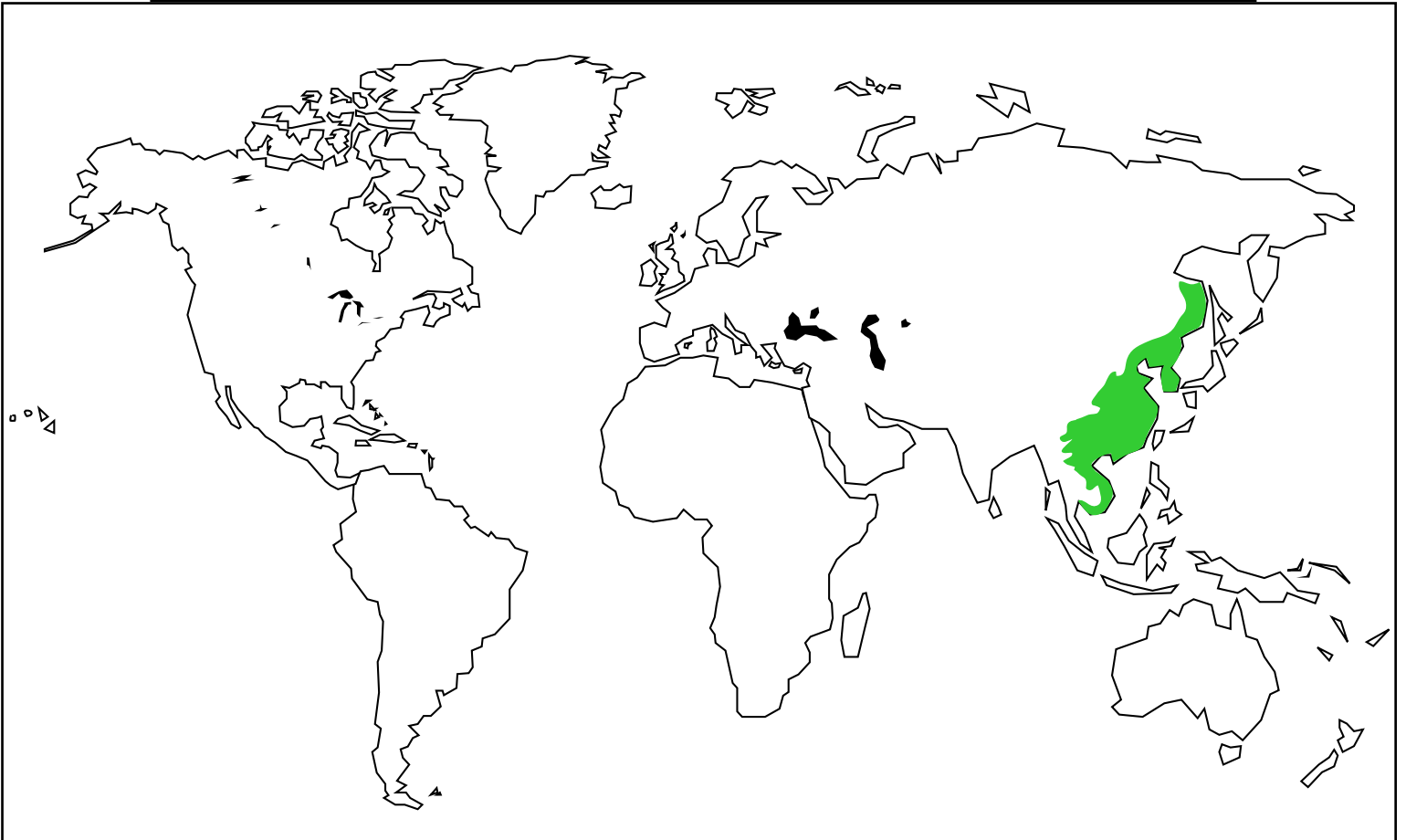
In some areas, Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle farms have been established, predominantly to supply the pet trade. While this may benefit this endangered species by lessening pressure on wild populations, turtle farms can sometimes present a cover for illegal activities. Turtles collected in the wild are passed through these farms as offspring of the captive turtles. Weak enforcement and low awareness pose significant obstacles to laws and other measures which seek to secure a future for the threatened freshwater turtles of Asia.

Amazing Facts

This species does not hibernate despite cold temperatures in some parts of its range.

The top of a turtle shell is called the carapace and the bottom is called the plastron.

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