

Geoclemys hamiltonii (Gray 1830) – Spotted Pond Turtle, Black Pond Turtle

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SUMMARY. – The spotted pond turtle, *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (Family Geoemydidae), is a medium-sized (straight carapace length to 40.5 cm) freshwater turtle from lentic waterbodies of the northern and northeastern Indian subcontinent. The species is primarily carnivorous, feeding on snails and insect larvae, but vegetative material has been found in some digestive tracts. Two clutches of 18–30 eggs are produced annually, eggs measuring ca. 51 x 21 mm. Drainage of standing water bodies for agriculture and urbanization and capture for food are factors suspected to threaten wild populations. The species has been reported to be rapidly declining in Bangladesh, but populations in a few protected areas in India are apparently relatively abundant.

DISTRIBUTION. – Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh. Distributed from eastern Pakistan, through the Ganga basin of northern India, to Bangladesh and northeastern India.

SYNONYMY. – *Emys hamiltonii* Gray 1830, *Clemmys* (*Clemmys*) *hamiltonii*, *Geoclemys hamiltonii*, *Damonia hamiltonii*, *Emys guttata* Gray 1831, *Emys picquotii* Lesson 1831, *Melanochelys pictus* Murray 1884, *Clemmys palaeindica* Lydekker 1885, *Geoclemys sivalensis* Tewari and Badam 1969.

SUBSPECIES. – None recognized.

STATUS. – IUCN 2009 Red List: Vulnerable (A1d+2d) (assessed 2000); CITES: Appendix I; Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act: Schedule I; Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Act: Schedule III.

Taxonomy. – *Emys hamiltonii* Gray 1830 was described from an unspecified locality in India. Synonyms include *Emys guttata* Gray 1831, *Emys picquotii* Lesson 1831, *Melanochelys pictus* Murray 1884, and the Plio-Pleistocene turtles, *Clemmys palaeindica* Lydekker 1885 and *Geoclemys sivalensis* Tewari and Badam 1969. No subspecies have been described and geographic variation,

if any, is unknown. The species is the genotype for the monotypic genus *Geoclemys* Gray 1856.

Description. – The shell is convex, strongly arched with sloping sides and three prominent, interrupted keels on the carapace. The plastron is narrow and deeply notched posteriorly. The head is extremely large, short-snouted, and the skin at the back of the forehead is divided into shields.



Figure 1. *Geoclemys hamiltonii*, adult female from Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India. Photo by Indraneil Das.