

**11– 12 – 2024**

**News:** Indian star tortoise

- The Indian star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) faces severe threats from habitat loss, illegal trade, and genetic disruption, making its conservation a critical priority.

## **Indian Star Tortoise**

- Indian Star Tortoise is found in **dry areas & Scrub forests in India, Pakistan & Sri Lanka**. It has an obsidian shell with striking Sun-yellow star patterns.
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable.
- CITES Status: Appendix I
- Wildlife Protection Act: Schedule IV
- The species faces two threats- **loss of habitat to agriculture and illegal harvesting for the pet trade**.
- According to Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, **“90% of trade of Star Tortoise occurs as part of International pet market”**.
- Recently India’s proposal to **upgrade the protection status of Star Tortoise from Appendix II to Appendix I** was approved by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

- Star Tortoise was included in the "Not all animals migrate by choice" campaign by Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB).

### **Genetic Study Insights**

- Researchers identified two distinct groups of Indian star tortoises: **Northwestern (genetically stable)** and **Southern (genetically diverse)**.
- Microsatellite **markers were used to track genetic relationships and population changes.**
- Microsatellite markers are **short DNA sequences that repeat in a particular location in the genome.**