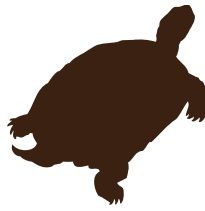


CARE SHEET



BCG
BRITISH CHELONIA GROUP

PATRON: PROFESSOR DAVID J. BELLAMY OBE

THE INDIAN STAR TORTOISE *(Geochelone elegans)*



Photo: Kimberley Carter

You can obtain further information on tortoise and terrapin care by consulting our website: www.britishcheloniagroup.org.uk or by writing to:

THE BRITISH CHELONIA GROUP
Membership and General Enquiries
P.O. Box 16216, Tamworth, Staffs. B77 9LA.

Please enclose an SAE

For tortoise, terrapin and turtle care and conservation.

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HABITAT: Arid land in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

FEATURES: Star Tortoises are easily recognised by the beautiful star-like pattern on their carapace. Females are larger and have broader shells; males have narrower, smoother shells which are not so beautifully marked. Juveniles are orange/yellow with dark seams. Adults grow to a maximum of 20cm (about 8 inches) in plastron length and weigh up to seven kilos (about 15lbs); males are slightly smaller and pyramiding of scutes is normal. Activity including feeding takes place early morning and late afternoon, except during the rainy season (mid-June to mid-October) when the animals are active all day and copulation takes place with males trying to turn each other over. Clutches of three to six comparatively large eggs are laid, sometimes several clutches in one year. Incubation is around 110 to 130 days.

FEEDING:

Native: the principal diet is herbaceous plants including grass, euphorbias and fallen acacia leaves. In the rainy season they prefer fruit and vegetables if available. They are also known to eat small vertebrates and insects.

Captive: In captivity the animals need a high fibre, calcium-rich diet and will learn to eat a wide variety of food. They should have access to grass and can also be fed various wild plants such as dandelion, clover, mallow and plantain. Green vegetables can be offered including cucumber, green beans and lettuce, plus carrots, butternut squash and peppers; feed brassicas in moderation. They will also enjoy a small proportion of fruits: try tomatoes, apples, melons, strawberries, raspberries, grapes, mangos and bananas. Bear in mind they would not have constant access to lush fruit and vegetables in the wild. Extra calcium can be given as calcium carbonate powder or as part of a proprietary mineral/vitamin supplement added to the food.

HUSBANDRY HINTS FOR CAPTIVE STAR TORTOISES IN BRITAIN

A heated greenhouse is ideal for this type of tortoise as the temperature should not drop below 21°C (70°F). Access to natural sunlight is essential for prevention of shell and eye disorders. When the weather allows they can be given the freedom of a lawn to crop the grass. This tortoise loves heat and basking, although when outdoors a shady area should be provided as well as a waterproof shelter. Water should always be available for drinking. Hatchlings and juveniles should be kept in a spacious vivarium in a thermostatically controlled environment with a temperature gradient of 24-35°C (75-95°F) with a UV lamp and a shelter; damp moss makes a suitable hideaway. Some males can be aggressive, so do not assume they can cohabit. In the wild they may hibernate for a short period, but it is unwise to try to imitate this and in Britain they should be overwintered in a suitable environment.

Revised August 2018