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Elongated Tortoise (*Intestudo elongata*)

Elongated in More Ways than One!

Also known as the Yellow Tortoise, the elongated tortoise is a medium sized to large species of Old World tortoise with a wide range over much of southern to southeastern Asia in tropical, humid forests, and occasionally other environments as well such as drier environments such as grasslands, savannahs, and shrublands. Coloration and patterning can be quite variable in these tortoises, but they generally have a pale tan, yellowish, to yellowish-brown carapace and shell with large, darker, irregular blotches on each scute. As their names imply, their carapaces are slightly elongated and narrowed as well. Their skin and scale color can also vary from tan, to yellowish, grayish, or brownish. Once a very common tortoise species over much of its range, they have declined drastically due to over-exploitation by food markets, the pet trade, and largest of all, habitat loss and fragmentation, and are thus now a CITES II listed species. Elongated tortoises are a secretive, and nocturnal to crepuscular species, being most active during the dawn and dusk hours, where they may bask and forage for food. During other times of the day, these tortoises spend much of their time burrowed into the moist leaf litter and other forest floor debris. It should be noted that all tortoises are mainly terrestrial (land dwelling) and are characterized by highly domed shells and large, elephantine like feet. Due to their medium and manageable size, most of these this species of tortoise has become increasingly popular and personable pets to maintain in captivity, but as with other tortoises, these tortoises, if given the proper care, can still live for 50 to 70 years and require long term care and commitment.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Suborder: Cryptodira

Superfamily: Testudinoidea

Family: Testudinidae

Genus: *Intestudo*

Species: *Intestudo elongata**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

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Lifespan and Longevity

These tortoises, if given the proper care, can attain longevity for 50 to 70 years and require long term care and commitment.

Distribution and Habitat

The elongated tortoise is widely distributed over much of southern to southeastern Asia, although their numbers and populations have declined drastically. This species typically occurs in the humid, tropical forests and woodlands from India, Bangladesh, Southern China, Myanmar, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam, and Malaysia through Thailand and Cambodia. This species also can occur in drier, grassland, shrub land, and savannah environments as well.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Endangered (EN).

Legal and Regulatory Status(*Subject to Change)

Testudinidae spp. are CITES Appendix II as of October 2017 (Except the species included in Appendix I. A zero annual export quota has been established for *Centrochelys sulcata* for specimens removed from the wild and traded for primarily commercial purposes). Turtles and tortoises under 4 inches are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Also consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

The elongated tortoise is a relatively medium sized to large tortoise, reaching a carapace length of 10 to 14 inches, and averaging 7 to 8 lbs. The sexes of these tortoises are also dimorphic, with females reaching larger and wider sizes than males.

Housing and Enclosure

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a 6 to 8 foot plastic or glass terrarium, stock tank or tub, or other enclosure can be used for younger and smaller elongated tortoises, and are lightweight and easy to clean. Providing increasingly larger enclosures accordingly for these tortoises is recommended as they become adults. A minimum enclosure size for one, or a pair of this species, should be at least 6 to 8 feet by 4 feet by 1 to 2 feet. Substrates that enable burrowing and retain moisture and humidity this species prefers, such as a mix of fine aspen chips, sand, peat moss, organic bark, or coconut fiber substrates are acceptable substrates to use for these tortoises. Substrate should be kept damp, but not overly wet. These tortoises can be shy, and prefer a variety of hides and shelters such as cork bark, large leaves and live or artificial foliage, rock or log hides, or grass and hay clippings.

Outdoor pens can work, and are highly recommended during the warmer months in temperate to sub-tropical climates, and can provide ample access to natural sunlight. Outdoor pens must have a perimeter at least 8 to 9 inches deep and at least 12 to 24 inches high. Be sure the enclosure is adequately sealed to prevent access by outdoor predators. Although they derive much of their water from their food, it is best to provide a large, shallow water dish or pan within the enclosure, which should be changed every several days or if fouled. Soaking your tortoise at least weekly in lukewarm water can also serve as added hydration. Providing an artificially heated hide box if housed in outdoor enclosures can provide for added safety and security for these tortoises.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of these tortoises in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone and shell growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Pyramiding of the scutes and shell can also occur due to poor or improper diet, lighting, or heating. Always be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. These tortoises require a thermal gradient using a ceramic or radiant heat emitter, UTH (or under tank heating pad), and UVA/UVB overhead lighting. Ambient and cool end temperatures should be within 70 to 75 degrees F and the basking area from 85 to 95 degrees F. Also be sure to maintain a light cycle of 12 to 14 hours per day, and monitor temperatures with a quality thermometer. This species of tortoise prefers adequately warm, humid, and tropical conditions, and husbandry should reflect this. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Herbivorous to Omnivorous; In the wild, these tortoises are herbivorous to omnivorous, and will graze upon a variety of grasses, flowers, fruit and vegetable matter, fungi, and other plant matter. They will also feed upon carrion, and even smaller vertebrates they can catch on occasion as well. In captivity, these tortoises can be given a mixed and varied assortment of chopped up salad and leafy greens and vegetables daily or as otherwise directed. Avoid spinach, citric fruits, Iceberg lettuce, and other acidic or otherwise nutritionally poor food items. More food items to avoid or use sparingly include most grain products, and dog and cat foods. A mix of fruits is also recommended once to twice weekly. These tortoises will also consume a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects, molluscs, and even cooked chicken and some other meats, although these components to their diets should only be given once weekly. Supplementing with Calcium and Vitamin D3 is also recommended as a part of these tortoises's diets.

Many flowers, dandelions, hibiscus, turnip, kale, mustard, and collard greens are also suitable choices. Ensure that all food intended for food for herbivorous to omnivorous animals is chemical, pesticide and herbicide free. Many of these are readily available in any grocer's market. Several commercially available herbivore and veggie mix diets are also available which can be used. Food items given should be sprayed with additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), shell pyramiding, and other shell and bone growth and nutritional deficiencies and maladies. Their feeding frequency can also often depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed turtles or tortoises, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Most small to mid-sized turtle and tortoise species that are not aggressive or prone to biting can be picked up and handled either by placing both hands along both sides of the shell, or from the rear of the carapace with the thumb on the carapace and index through pinky fingers on the plastron to reduce the chances of being kicked, scratched, or nipped when they are threatened. Although most species of chelonians are not outwardly aggressive, defensive, or dangerous, they can become stressed as a result of over-handling, however, and some species, and even individual animals can be shyer than others. These are some considerations to keep in mind when

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handling any chelonian species.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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