



Critically Endangered Elongated Tortoise spotted in Aravallis

Why in News?

Recently, a [critically endangered elongated tortoise](#) was spotted for the first time in the Aravallis.

Key Points

- **Elongated tortoise:** Characterized by a **yellowish-brown** or [olive shell](#) with distinct **black blotches at the center** of each scute, was found in **Haryana's Damdama area**.
 - During the breeding season, mature tortoises develop a pink ring around their nostrils and eyes.
- **Habitat and Distribution:** The [elongated tortoise](#) is found in [Sal deciduous](#) and [hilly evergreen forests](#).
 - Its distribution spans [Southeast Asia](#), from northern **India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh** in the west, through **Myanmar, Thailand, Indochina**, north to Guangxi Province of **China, and south to Peninsular Malaysia**.
 - A disjunct population exists in the [Chota Nagpur plateau](#) in eastern India.
 - It also inhabits lowlands and foothills up to 1,000 meters above sea level.
 - The **tortoise's presence in the Aravallis** is an **anomaly** as it is usually found in the foothills of the [Himalayas and wetter areas](#).
- **Conservation Status:** Elongated tortoises are **critically endangered** according to the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Red List, assessed in 2018](#).
 - The species is heavily exploited for food and traditional medicine, with opportunistic and deliberate hunting, and the use of dogs to locate tortoises.

Aravalis

- The Aravali Range extends from **Gujarat to Delhi through Rajasthan**, 692 km in length and varies between **10 to 120 km** in width.
 - The range acts as a natural green wall, with 80% located in Rajasthan and 20% in Haryana, Delhi, and Gujarat.
- The aravali mountains are divided into two, **main ranges - the Sambhar Sirohi Range and the Sambhar Khetri Range in Rajasthan**, where their extension is about 560 km.
- It serves as an [ecotone](#) between the [Thar Desert](#) and the [Gangetic Plain](#).
 - Ecotones are areas where two or more ecosystems, biological communities, or biotic regions meet.
- **Gurusikhar (Rajasthan)**, the highest peak in the range, reaches an elevation of 1,722 meters.

