

## A turtle *Lissemys punctata* observed in TFRI campus



A turtle strolling along the roadside in TFRI campus was seen by the TFRI people at noon on dated 07.07.2014. The information was given to Director, TFRI who directed the Estate Officer and other concerned officers for its inspection and handing over to Wild Life Warden, Jabalpur. During inspection, the fresh water male was

identified as *Lissemys punctata* subspecies *andersonii* (Webb, 1980), and commonly known as **Indian Flapshell Turtle**. It is listed under Schedule – I of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Immediately, the information about the turtle was given to Wild Life Warden, Jabalpur who sent a rescue team and finally the turtle was handed over to the rescue team of Wild Life Department, Jabalpur at 5 pm on the same day.

Actually, it is a domed shaped turtle with soft shell. The shell is oval with hinged anterior lobes of cream colour whereas the ventral side or plastron is of yellow colour. The carapace is olive green coloured with



scattered spots. It is a scavenger and feeds on animal corpses as well as tadpoles, fishes, invertebrates and water plants.



It was recorded in "Illustrations of Indian Zoology" (Gray, 1832-1938) as *Testudo punctata*. Das (1990) reported a single individual in Diffolu river in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP), Assam. It was again observed in 2009 by Ahmed and Das in the same park. It is a highly acceptable species in salt marshes, river, ponds, ox-bow lakes, streams, rice fields and in canals (Das, 1995). O'Brien

(2004) described *Lissemys punctata andersonii* one of the most preferred turtle species amongst the buyers from India and Abroad. The plastron part of the body of the species has high demand in China for making gelatin which has scaled up the hunting to an unsustainable level (Pasha *et al.*, 2009). The population of this turtle is pushed close to extinction due to over exploitation for the local trade and now become very rare in the low lying areas of the Indian states.

