

5. ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GANGES



Gharial (Crocodile variety)



Ganga Dolphin



Ganges Softshell Turtle / *Aspideretes gangeticus* (Cuvier, 1825)

Ganges soft-shell turtle (*Nilssonina gangeticus*) is a relict species.

Ganga Dolphins are one of only four varieties of exclusively freshwater dolphins in the world, with the others residing in China, Pakistan and in the Amazon river basin. However, a combination of pollution and poaching for their oil has threatened their survival. As such, they are recognized by Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) as a “highly endangered” species and indeed, only an estimated 2,000 or so remain. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has recently declared the Ganga Dolphin as India’s “National Aquatic Animal” – a clear sign of the importance of this rare species.



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