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Geographical range

Amazing Species: Giant South American River Turtle

The **Giant South American River Turtle**, *Podocnemis expansa*, is currently listed as 'Least Concern' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™; however, a recent Red List re-evaluation of this species suggests that it will be listed as 'Critically Endangered' following completion of the formal review process. This impressive species can reach over 80 cm in shell length and 65 kg in mass, and inhabits most rivers of the Amazon and Orinoco basins.

Historically this was an extremely abundant species, migrating by the thousands up rivers to nest communally on high sandbars. Remarkably, females and hatchlings use underwater vocalizations for communication, and hatchlings migrate with the adults to feeding areas that can be many miles away. The overexploitation of eggs and turtles for consumption and oil extraction has decimated most Giant South American River Turtle populations, and recovery of this species is impeded by ongoing exploitation as well as the construction of mega-dams.

Long-term conservation efforts by the Brazilian government and others, including the release of huge numbers of hatchlings from protected nests, have stabilized some populations of this species and others are now increasing.

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