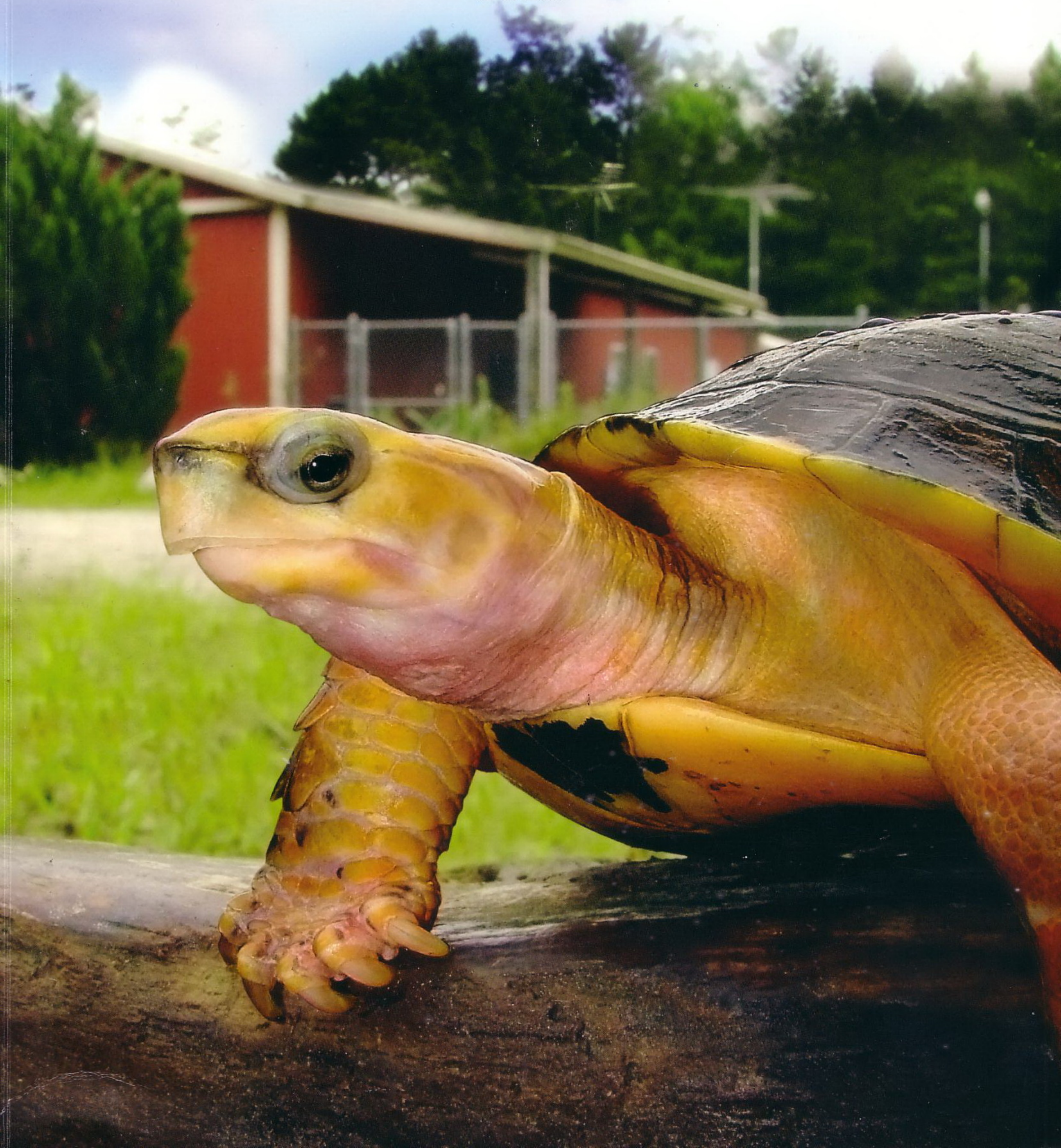


A PUBLICATION OF THE TURTLE SURVIVAL ALLIANCE

Turtle Survival

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Construction is underway on a new turtle conservation center in Nepal. PHOTO CREDIT: ARCO NEPAL

Nepal's Budo Holy Turtle Rescue and Conservation Center Under Construction

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Founded in 1997, ARCO-Nepal (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation of Nepal), is a conservation society whose mission includes increased awareness of biology, systematics, and the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in Nepal. The acronym ARCO utilizes an English translation of the Nepali name to emphasize international collaboration. "Arco" in Nepali also means "the bow", or "rainbow", a symbol for nature that spans our efforts, and also serves as ARCO's colorful logo.

ARCO-Nepal actively supports the Turtle Conservation Project (Systematics, Biology and Conservation of the Turtles of Nepal), an endeavor approved by the Nepalese government

in January 1997. We also study the conservation needs and habitats of the amphibian and reptilian fauna of our nation.

THE CHELONIANS OF NEPAL

It is believed that there may be up to 17 turtle species in Nepal, though only 14 have been confirmed at present, with all occurrences in the lower subtropical parts of the country.

Future investigations are needed to determine whether species from neighboring countries such as *Geoclemys hamiltoni*, *Morenia petersi*, or the big Batagurs (*B. donghoka*, *B. kachuga*) ever were or might still exist within Nepal's borders. All freshwater turtle species and

tortoises in Nepal currently have some degree of endangered status.

THE BUDO HOLY TURTLE CENTER UNDER CONSTRUCTION

With its launch in 1997, ARCO-Nepal began planning and researching the construction of a turtle rescue and conservation center, along with the establishment of a turtle recovery plan that would benefit the local Nepalese people. The Budo Holy project in southeastern Nepal will be the culmination of this effort, offering a win-win scenario for both endangered turtles and local people.

Once built this rescue and breeding center, will become a home for priority species that will be kept

and bred here in order to establish local assurance colonies. Within the center's protected wetlands, freshwater turtle species will be reintroduced in collaboration with and under the surveillance of the Department of National Parks & Wildlife.

In April 2012, a Memorandum Of Understanding was signed between local Nepali authorities (SUMMEF) and ARCO Nepal, making the turtle conservation center a joint venture. ARCO has agreed with the Nepalese government to contribute \$35,000 for the development of the turtle breeding center. 15,000 is needed to start planning, designing and building. In 2012, the Dutch and Belgium Turtle and Tortoise Society (NBSV) agreed to fund the project from 2012 to 2014, a promising start that should allow us to get construction underway. Other funding sources are being explored.

Important work has already been completed outdoors at the Budo Holy park. The park's large main lake—once empty—has now been filled with water thanks to the repair of its dam, and plantings have been added. A smaller lake and several pools are under construction and will be done soon. All these water bodies have been fenced to keep turtles in and unwanted people out.

At present, turtles found by local people in the vicinity of the Budo Holy park are brought to the already existing SUMMEF park's recreation lake—an unprotected visitors area. These animals will eventually become the founder animals for ARCO's assurance breeding colonies. Breeding and rearing tanks are planned in the future, as are quarantine areas and a small veterinary room for examination, treatment and isolation of sick animals. Plans have been drawn up for the buildings.

Participation by local people is vital to the success of this project. We hope, for example, to get nearby communities involved in breeding food items such as live fish, and growing vegetables, to fulfill the daily dietary needs of turtles kept at the center.

ARCO'S ONGOING EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The Budo Holy project also will include a strong awareness and education component, which is still under development. Booklets and posters have already been created for the program, and are available to local education groups as a free download from our website at www.ARCO-Nepal.de. In summer 2013, a completely new and updated Nepal field guide will be issued by ARCO-Nepal.

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Dried "wetland" before damming. PHOTO CREDIT: ARCO NEPAL



Restored main lake. PHOTO CREDIT: ARCO NEPAL