

Pakistan releases smuggled turtles into the wild

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Black Pond Turtles feed on plants, fish and shrimp and the species is found in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal

Pakistani officials and environmentalists on Monday released some 200 rare turtles into the River Indus after the reptiles were retrieved from a southwestern Chinese town where they were seized by customs officials.

The Black Pond Turtles, which are listed as a "vulnerable" species, were

smuggled from Pakistan to Taxkorgan in China's Xinjiang autonomous region in June.

According to a Chinese government statement, the [turtles](#) were found on a truck. Authorities arrested a suspect and then five would-be buyers.

Pakistani wildlife officials in August travelled by road to bring the turtles back home to a sanctuary in the town of Sukkur 470 kilometres (294 miles) north of Karachi in Sindh province, where they were held in quarantine.

"It is like we rescued a ship from the clutches of pirates. We are now releasing them into their natural habitat and it is a great accomplishment for me and my whole team," Javed Mahar, the chief of Sindh Wildlife Department, told AFP.

The black turtles, which feeds on plants, fish and shrimp, are also found in India's Ganges as well as the rivers of Bangladesh and Nepal.

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