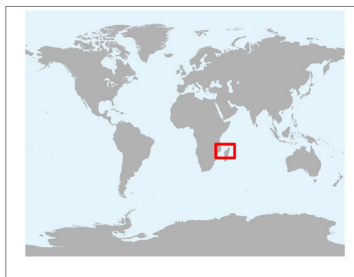




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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Ploughshare Tortoise

The **Ploughshare Tortoise**, *Astrochelys yniphora*, is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ due to a declining wild population of a few hundred animals. The elongated front spike of the undershell, used by males in breeding jousts for females, is the most remarkable feature of this spectacular tortoise.

Restricted to a tiny area of dry scrubland in northwestern Madagascar, this species has received conservation attention since the early 1970s. Protection of the small population in its natural habitat and a captive breeding programme slowly began to increase its numbers, until it became a target of illegal international wildlife traders.

Though strictly protected under Malagasy and CITES laws, unacceptable numbers of animals are smuggled and sold for huge sums by criminal pet dealers. Enhanced conservation measures are urgently needed to save this species, notably enforcing legal protection to prosecute those who drive the illegal trade, and repatriating recovered animals to secure breeding programmes.

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