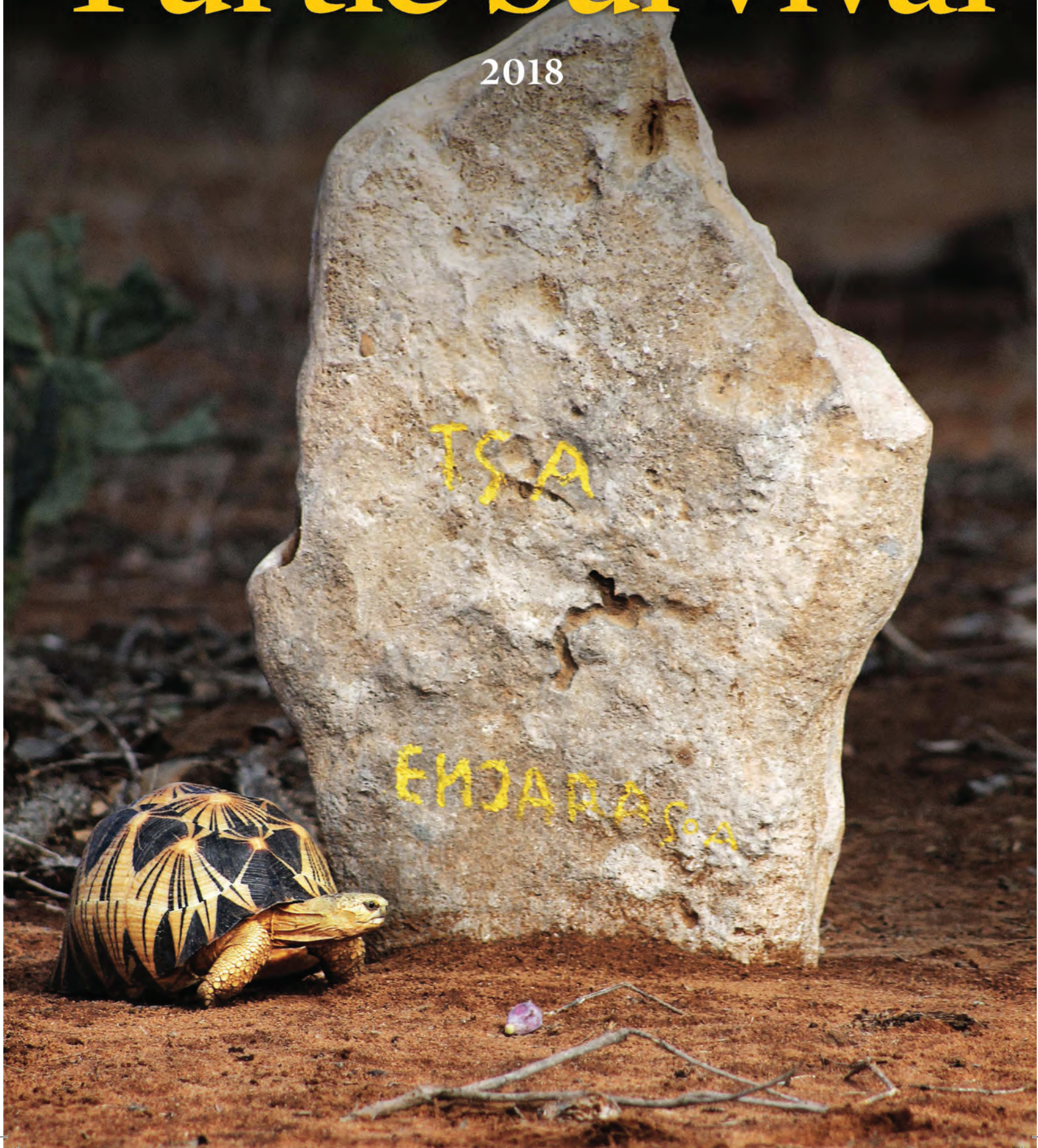


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***Batagur Baska* Project: Captive Population Growth Demands New Management Strategies**

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Two newly hatched Northern River Terrapins at Bhawal National Park. PHOTO CREDIT: AGJ MORSHED

Three years ago the *Batagur baska* Project, a multinational conservation initiative for the critically endangered Northern River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*), established a second breeding facility in southern Bangladesh to complement the program's existing conservation area in Bhawal National Park. In this time, new breeding environments, nesting beaches, and hatcheries have been established there. Today, this facility within the Karamjal Forest Station houses almost 150 individual terrapins.

This year, to accommodate the growing ju-

venile terrapins, we built an additional pond, which provides a better, more expansive habitat for the large number of four and five-year-olds. The Bangladesh Forest Department dedicated an unused area adjacent to the current project site, and a 40 x 20 x 3 m pond was dug with the help of local workers. This new juvenile habitat is surrounded by a sloping shoreline that serves as a basking area, and fortified walls which protect the terrapins from predators.

Meanwhile, the reproductive adult females at

both the Karamjal and Bhawal facilities laid their annual egg clutches in March. Roughly 70 days later, 44 young turtles successfully hatched. The continuously growing number of captive-bred individuals at the two facilities demonstrates that the *Batagur baska* Project provides a secure and productive captive environment for the Northern River Terrapin to successfully reproduce and flourish.

For the *Batagur baska* Project to ultimately be successful, it is imperative that the captive-breeding component connects to a



Juvenile Northern River Terrapins bask on a bamboo platform in their rearing environment in Bhawal National Park. PHOTO CREDIT: ANTON WEISSENBACHER

strategy for a sustainable reintroduction of the terrapin in the near future. This strategy includes fieldwork aimed at finding and protecting natural habitats utilized by the species. With the help of several funders, we were not only able to enlarge and renovate the breeding facilities, we were also able to finance new satellite transmitters for specimen tracking in their native habitat. The project team will equip five males with transmitters and release them in the Sundarbans at the beginning of the breeding season in October. Movement transmissions will hopefully help indicate habitat preferences and identify travel routes, which will be taken into consideration when strategizing a prospective release program in the future.

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The newly finished juvenile pond in the Karamjal Conservation Center, Bangladesh. PHOTO CREDIT: ABDUR ROB

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