



Olive Ridley Turtles

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Why in News

The Orissa High Court has taken suo motu cognisance of the death of around 800 **Olive Ridley sea turtles** due to negligence by Odisha's forest and fisheries departments.

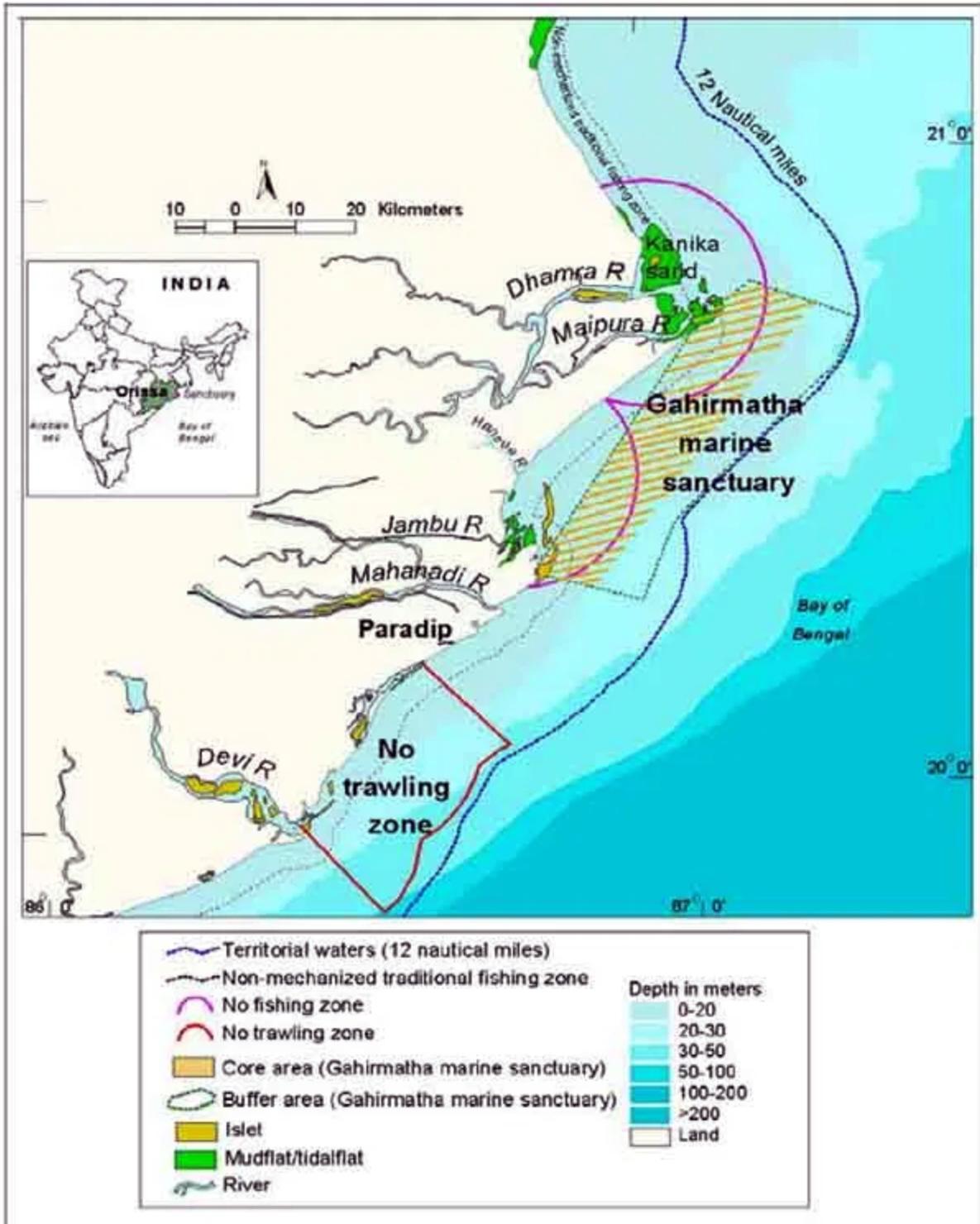
Key Points

- **Features of Olive Ridley Turtles:**
 - The Olive ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
 - These turtles are carnivores and get their name from their olive colored carapace.
- **Protection Status:**
- **Habitat:**
 - They are found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
 - The Odisha's **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary** is known as the world's largest rookery (colony of breeding animals) of sea turtles.
- **Arribada (Mass Nesting):**
 - They are best known for their **unique mass nesting called Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
 - They lay their eggs over a period of five to seven days in conical nests about one and a half feet deep which they dig with their hind flippers.
- **Threats:**
 - **Marine pollution and waste**
 - **Human Consumption:** They are extensively poached for their meat, shell and leather, and eggs.
 - **Plastic Garbage:** An ever-increasing debris of plastics, fishing nets, discarded nets, polythene and other garbage dumped by tourists and fishing workers.
 - **Fishing Trawlers:** Overexploitation of marine resources by use of trawlers often violates the rule to not fish 20 kilometres within a marine sanctuary.

There were injury marks on many dead turtles indicating they could have been trapped under trawls or gill nets.

Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary

- Gahirmatha is the mass nesting spot in Indian Ocean region and the only turtle sanctuary in Odisha.
- It is the **world's largest nesting beach** of Olive Ridley Sea Turtles.
- Gahirmatha was declared a **turtle sanctuary in 1997** by the Odisha government after considering its ecological importance and as part of efforts to save the sea turtles.
- Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary is one of the three parts of the Bhitarkanika National Park. The other two includes the area of Bhitarkanika National Park and the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary.



Source: DTE