



Olive Ridley Turtles

Why in News

Researchers of the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** are carrying out **tagging of Olive Ridley turtles at three mass nesting sites** - Gahirmatha, Devi River mouth and Rushikulya.

- The **exercise was undertaken in Odisha in January 2021** after a span of about 25 years and 1,556 turtles had been tagged.

Key Points

- **Tagging and its Significance:**
 - The metal tags affixed to turtles are **non-corrosive**, which can be removed later **and they do not harm their body**.
 - The tags are **uniquely numbered containing details** such as the name of the organisation, country-code and email address.
 - If researchers in other countries come across the tagged turtles, they will email their location in longitude and latitude to researchers in India. There is an established network working on turtles.
 - It would **help them identify the migration path and places** visited by the marine reptiles after congregation and nesting.
- **Olive Ridley Turtles:**
 - **About:**

- 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.
- They are **best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- **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**
- **Protection Status:**
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Scheduled 1
 - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
- **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 kilometers within a marine sanctuary.
 - There were injury marks on many dead turtles indicating they could have been trapped under trawls or gill nets.
- **Initiatives to Protect Olive Ridley Turtles:**
 - **Operation Olivia:**
 - Every year, the **Indian Coast Guard's "Operation Olivia"**, initiated in the early 1980s, helps protect Olive Ridley turtles as they congregate along the Odisha coast for breeding and nesting from November to December.
 - It also intercepts **unlawful trawling activities.**
 - **Mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs):**
 - To reduce accidental killing in India, the Odisha government has made it mandatory for **trawls to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs)**, a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)

- It is a **subordinate organization of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, established in 1916.
- It is a **national centre for faunistic survey** and exploration of the resources leading to the advancement of knowledge on the exceptionally rich faunal diversity of the country.
- It **has its headquarters at Kolkata** and 16 regional stations located in different geographic locations of the country.

[Source: TH](#)

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