



Marginal Rise in Saltwater Crocodile Population in Bhitarkanika

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

[Bhitarkanika National Park](#) in **Odisha**, renowned for its diverse ecosystem, has observed a slight increase in the population of [saltwater crocodiles](#) (*Crocodylus porosus*) during the annual census in **2024**.

What are the Key Points Related to Salt-water Crocodiles?

- **About:** The saltwater crocodile is the **largest of all crocodilians**, and the **largest reptile in the world**.
 - Female saltwater crocodiles are smaller in size than their male counterparts, normally reaching a maximum length of 2.5 to 3 m.
 - They **tolerate salinity** and are found mostly in coastal waters or near rivers. They are also found in freshwater near rivers and swamps.
- **Communication:** Saltwater crocodiles communicate using several sounds, including **barking, hissing, growling and chirps**.
- **Distribution:** Tropical to warm temperate latitudes in the **eastern Indian and western Pacific oceans**.
- **Habitat:** [Mangrove forests](#) and other coastal habitats
- **Prey:** Saltwater crocodiles have a variety of prey. Juveniles are restricted to **small insects, amphibians, reptiles, crustaceans, and small fish**.
 - Adults feed on **crabs, turtles, snakes, birds, buffalo, wild boar, and monkeys**.
 - Saltwater crocodiles hide in the water exposing only their eyes and nose. They **lunge at prey, often killing it with a single snap of the jaws**, then drag the prey under water where it is more easily consumed.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - [IUCN Red list](#) : Least Concern
 - [WPA, 1972](#): Schedule I
 - [CITES](#) : Appendix I/II

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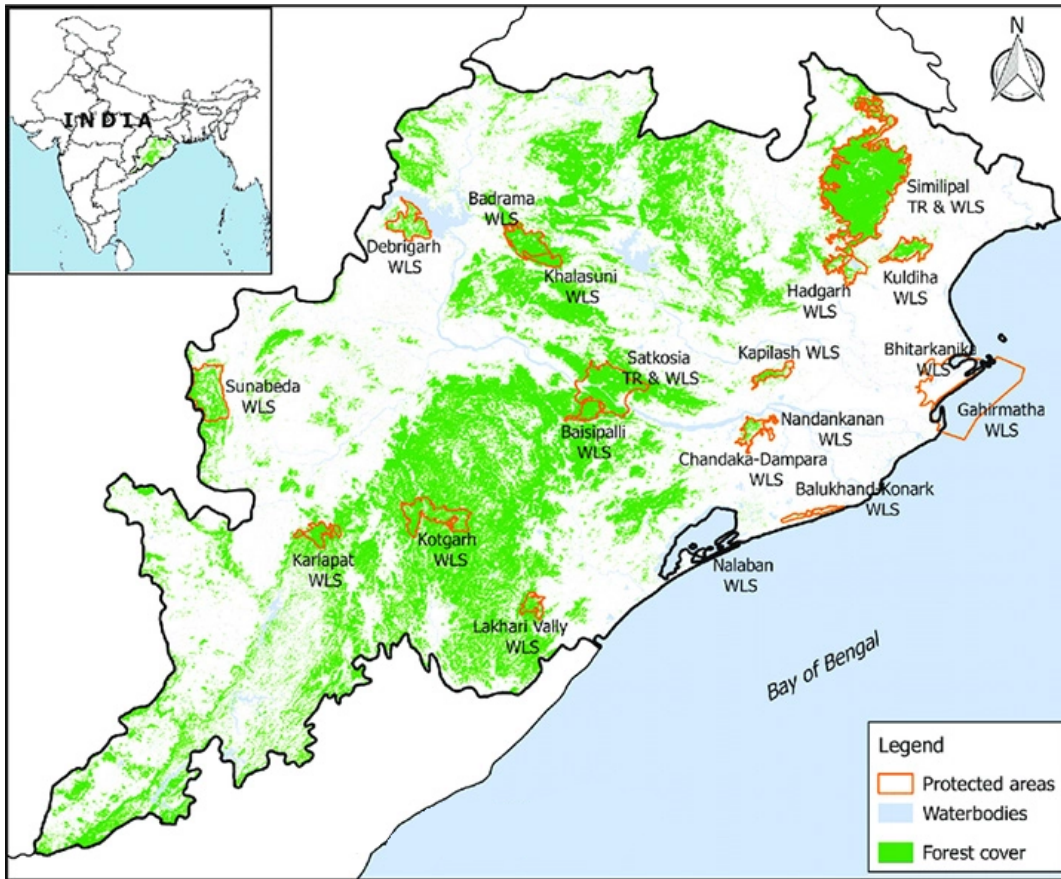


Note

Bhitarkanika is the **second-largest mangrove forest in India after the Sundarbans** in West Bengal. Both areas are among the three strongholds of saltwater crocodiles, the third being the [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#).

What are the Key Facts about Bhitarkanika National Park (NP)?

- The Bhitarkanika NP is essentially a network of creeks and canals which are inundated with waters from rivers **Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra and Patasala** forming a unique ecosystem.
 - The Gahirmatha Beach which forms the **boundary of the sanctuary in the east** is the largest colony of the **Olive Ridley Sea Turtles**.
- A unique phenomenon observed in this NP is the **Bagagahana or the heronry near Surajpore creek**.
 - Thousands of birds colonise the creek for nesting and the aerial acrobatics performed prior to the mating makes for an impressive sight.
- Bhitarkanika is also home to **eight varieties of Kingfisher birds** which is also a rarity.



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