



# Sea Turtle Poaching

## Why in News?

According to a new study, **more than 1.1 million sea turtles have been illegally killed** and, in some cases, trafficked from 1990 to 2020.

- The sea turtle species that faced the most exploitation in the 30-year-period were Green (56%) and Hawksbill Sea Turtles (39%).



## What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- **Marginal Decline in Poaching:** There has been a decline of 28% in the poaching of marine creatures, with over 44,000 turtles targeted annually over the last decade.
- **Exploitation:** The reptiles faced exploitation in 65 countries/territories and 44 marine **turtle regional management units (RMU)** in the world despite various protection laws.
- **Illegal Trade of Species:** Southeast Asia and Madagascar were major hotspots for illegal sea turtle trade, particularly for the **critically endangered Hawksbills**.
  - **Vietnam** was the most common country of origin for illegal sea turtle trafficking, while China and Japan served as destinations for nearly all trafficked sea turtle products.
  - They are slaughtered for their eggs, meat, skin, and shell and they also face habitat destruction and accidental capture or bycatch in fishing gear.
- **Effects of Climate change:** The **Climate change** has an impact on turtle nesting sites — it alters sand temperatures, which affects the sex of hatchlings.
  - Because incubation temperature of turtle eggs determines the animal's sex, a warmer nest results in more females. Increasing temperatures in Queensland's north, (Australia), linked to climate change, have led to virtually **no male Green Sea turtles being born**.
- **Initiatives:**
  - **Global:** In 2017, residents in eastern Indonesia's Maluku Province harvested up to 75% of

leatherback turtle eggs laid on one turtle nesting beach.

- Education and community outreach done by organisations like the non-governmental organisation **World Wide Fund** has helped in reducing turtle egg harvesting by 10%.
- **Indian:** There are plans to tag 30,000 **Olive Ridley turtles in Odisha**, it will help scientists study them and draft conservation plans.

## What do We Need to Know about Sea Turtles?

### ▪ About:

- Sea turtles are **marine reptiles with streamlined bodies** and large flippers that are well-adapted to life in the ocean.
- The sea turtle family includes the **Hawksbill, Loggerhead, Leatherback, Green and Olive ridley turtle**.
- These five species are found worldwide, mainly in tropical and subtropical waters.
- Other than the five species, there are **two more types of sea turtles** that have restricted ranges.
  - **Kemp's Ridley** is found mainly in the Gulf of Mexico and the **Flatback Turtle** around northern Australia and southern Papua New Guinea.

### ▪ Conservation Status:

- [The International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Status:](#)
  - Flatback Turtle: Data Deficient
  - Green Turtle: **Endangered**
  - Hawksbill Turtle: **Critically Endangered**
  - Kemp's Ridley: **Critically Endangered**
  - Loggerhead Turtle: **Vulnerable**
  - **Olive Ridley: Vulnerable**
  - Leatherback Turtle: **Vulnerable**
- [The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\) status:](#)
  - All seven species of sea turtles are currently listed as **Appendix- I** under CITES.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

#### Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Some species of turtles are herbivores.
2. Some species of fish are herbivores.
3. Some species of marine mammals are herbivores.
4. Some species of snakes are viviparous.

#### Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- **Green sea turtles are adapted to the mostly vegetarian diet of sea grasses and algae.** As adults, these are the only predominantly herbivorous sea turtles, although they are carnivorous from hatching until juvenile size. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Surgeonfish and parrotfish are two species of fish often seen feeding on reef algae. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- Manatees, sometimes called sea cows, are large mammals that live in the warm sea waters. They live in shallow coastal areas and feed on sea vegetation. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Snakes that are viviparous nourish their young ones through a placenta and yolk sac. Boa constrictors and green anacondas are two examples of viviparous snakes. **Hence, statement 4 is correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer**

**Source: DTE**

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