



# World Turtle Day 2025

[Source: TOI](#)

**World Turtle Day** is observed annually on **23rd May** to highlight the importance of conserving **turtles** and **tortoises**.

- The day was **established in 2000** to **raise awareness and promote conservation** of **turtles and tortoises** globally.

## What are the Key Facts Related to Turtles?

- **About: Turtles (*Order Testudines*)** are **reptiles** distinguished by a **cartilaginous shell** developed from their ribs, forming a **protective shield**.
  - Unlike other animals with shells, **turtles cannot shed or exit their shell**, as it is an **integral part of their skeleton**.
- **Habitat:** Turtles can live in **both freshwater** and **marine (sea) environments**.
- **Different From Tortoise:** **Tortoises** differ from other turtles primarily by being **strictly terrestrial**, while **many turtle species are partially aquatic**.
  - Although **all tortoises are turtles**, not all turtles are tortoises.
  - Both are generally shy, solitary animals that lay eggs on land by burying them in nests.
- **Key Features:** Turtles are **cold-blooded (ectothermic)** species, i.e they can **regulate their body temperature by moving between warmer and cooler environments**.
  - Like other ectotherms such as **insects, fish, and amphibians**, they exhibit **slow metabolism** and can **survive extended periods without food or water**.
- **Key Species:**
  - **Sea Turtles:** Loggerhead Turtle, [Green Turtle](#), Hawksbill Turtle, Leatherback Turtle, [Olive Ridley Turtle](#), and Flatback Turtle.
  - **Freshwater Turtles:** Snapping Turtle, Painted Turtle, Red-eared slider Turtle, Spiny Softshell Turtle and Musk Turtle etc.

# Few Turtle Species



## Loggerhead Sea Turtle

- Species of oceanic turtle
- Spend most of their life in saltwater and estuarine habitat
- IUCN status: **Vulnerable**

## Leatherback Turtle

- The largest of the seven species of sea turtles
- Able to maintain high body temperature using metabolically generated heat
- IUCN status: **Critically Endangered**



## Green Turtle

- Named after the greenish colour of their cartilage
- Found in tropical and subtropical waters
- IUCN Status: **Endangered**

## Olive Ridley Turtle

- Smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles
- Carnivores
- They practice Unique Mass Nesting called Arribada
- IUCN Status: **Vulnerable**



#FewTurtleSpecies

## What is the State of Turtle Species in India?

- **Species in India:** India is home to **30 species of freshwater turtles**, 26 of which are listed under **Schedule I** of the [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#).
  - Assam, West Bengal & Uttar Pradesh have high **turtle diversity**.
  - India also hosts **5 sea turtle species: Olive Ridley, Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, and Leatherback**. All of which are protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- **Protection Status** (as per the [IUCN Red List](#)):
  - **Olive Ridley, Loggerhead, and Leatherback:** Vulnerable
  - **Green Turtle:** Endangered
  - **Hawksbill Turtle:** Critically Endangered
- **Threats:** Turtles face severe threats from **habitat destruction, climate change, plastic pollution, and illegal wildlife trade** for meat, pets, and traditional medicine, with Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal being major trafficking hotspots.

- **Conservation Efforts:** UP leads in conserving turtles by establishing **turtle conservation centres** in **Kukrail (Lucknow)**, **Sarnath (Varanasi)**, **Chambal (Etawah)**, and a **30 km Turtle Sanctuary in Prayagraj**.
  - The Forest Department **actively curbs illegal trade**, especially in Pilibhit, a major trafficking hotspot identified in [WCCB's Operation Kurma](#).
  - To enhance efforts, a **Turtle Conservation and Research Centre** is being set up in [Pilibhit Tiger Reserve](#) along **River Mala**, funded by [CAMPA](#).

**Read More:** [Olive Ridley Turtles in India](#), [Illicit Trade of Tortoises and Hard-Shell Turtles](#)

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

Q. Which one of the following is the national aquatic animal of India? (2015)

- (a) Saltwater crocodile
- (b) Olive ridley turtle
- (c) Gangetic dolphin
- (d) Gharial

**Ans: C**

**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)**