

BI-MONTHLY REPORT ON SEA TURTLE AND THEIR HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAMME [November –December 2010]

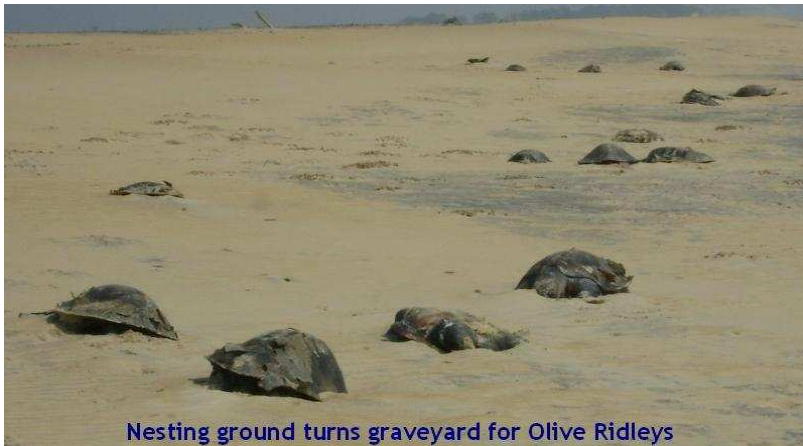
BACKGROUND:

The 480 km. long coastal zone in Orissa is amongst the most dynamic of the coastal environments of India due to its critical location as well as physical, biological and oceanographic processes there by being a vital area of life support by creating within it a variety of ecological niches. Three of the world's six known major mass nesting beaches of olive ridley occur in Orissa. The three mass nesting beaches in Orissa at Gahirmatha, Devi River mouth and Rushikulya together support a significant portion of the world's olive ridley population. Although mass nesting or arribada takes place in these beaches, the adjacent beaches are also contribute greatly through highly sporadic nesting of sea turtles.

The Olive Ridley sea turtle offers one of nature's greatest spectacles. The Olive Ridley sea turtle, which nests along the Orissa coast, is highly endangered today. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) lists this species as Endangered or critically endangered. Some of the threats these sea turtles face in the Orissa are drowning in shrimp nets, getting caught in net, development of nesting beaches, habitat and light pollution. The polluted beaches make unsuitable for turtles to nests, the high predation by feral and wild animals are hindrance and moreover, the human activities are harmful for habitat and breeding of turtles.

TURTLE TROUBLE:

Of critical concern, however, is that over 500 dead turtles have been recorded along the Orissa coastline over the last two months in the ongoing turtle nesting season. The nesting beaches have turned into graveyard for the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles. It is noted that, over 1 lakh dead Olive Ridelys have been reported along the Orissa coast since last one decade.



Nesting ground turns graveyard for Olive Ridelys



Stray dog feast to a dead female turtle and her eggs

Turtle mortality data in Orissa coast (still date 31st December, 2010)

SI No	Place/Site	No's of dead turtle recorded	Source
1	Rushikullya river mouth to Podampeta	08	Rushikullya Sea Turtle Protection Committee
2	Petaphata to Siali	94	Action for Protection of Wild Animals(APOWA)
3	Kalavedi to Ramtara	56	Action for Protection of Wild Animals(APOWA)
4	Mahanadi river mouth to Jatadhari	35	Action for Protection of Wild Animals(APOWA)
5	Gahirmatha	152	Rajnagar Mangrove Forest(WL) Division
6	Devi river mouth	Data not collected	-

APOWA's ACTION:

Presently, APOWA's activities each nesting season include:

- 1) Protect, conserve and rehabilitate sea turtle, their nest and habitats
- 2) Involve local community in sea turtle and their habitat protection efforts.
- 3) Develop sustainable programs for protecting the olive ridley sea turtle and their habitats that are critical to the survival of marine biodiversity.
- 4) Develop public awareness and education campaign about sea turtles and their habitat
- 5) Develop education programs for teachers and students about sea turtle conservation
- 6) Promote alternative livelihood for traditional fishermen

OUR OPERATIONAL AREA:

The operational area situated south of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary in Orissa known for world's largest Olive Ridley turtle nesting and breeding ground. Although mass nesting takes place at Gahirmatha, the buffer zone contributes greatly through sporadic nesting of Olive Ridley turtles. The project field works are in the buffer zone of Gahirmatha viz. Pentha, Sandhakud, Jatadhari mouth, Paradeep urban beach, Siali and Petaphata.

UPDATE ACTIVITIES:

A) Beach Clean and Educational Programme at Pentha under Gahirmatha sea turtle rookery

The beach debris make the habitat unsuitable for nesting and we are try to clean the beach for providing the Olive Ridley, a safe and clean nesting habitat. The Cleaning of beach debris from important nesting habitat to ensure sea turtles easier access to nesting sites.



Nesting Beach Cleaning programme at Pentha

As per the schedule, the beach cleaning and educational programme was conducted at Pentha beach, a part of the Gahirmatha sea turtle rookery on 20th December 2010. School students of M.N.High school, Pattamundai and Nigamanada Ucha Vidyapitha, Badanaukana have joined hands with members of APOWA to clean about three kilometer sea beach at Pentha to facilitate mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles. Apart from that 30 community volunteers from the near by villages and members of Banabihari Jew Disaster Resilience committee have participated the programme. Around 100 participants cleared all garbage from the beach to nearest dustbin installed by APOWA. With

nesting of the turtles round the corner, it is required to keep the nesting beach clean.

In the afternoon session, a sea turtle educational programme was conducted for school students, local communities and public at Pentha beach. The programme was attended by Mr. Binod Acharya, forest range officer, Rajnagar Mangrove (WL) division, Mr. Baikuntha Behera, forester, Mr. Manoj Kumar Satapathy, Eco club resource teacher, Mrs. Aradhana Dash, eco club teacher, MN High School, Mr. Ashok Kumar Dash, teacher MN High School, Mr. Ghanshyam Bal, head master, Pentha UP school, Mr. Ramagovinda Lenka and Dharma Panda, teacher, Nigamanada Ucha Vidyapitha as resource persons. The programme was coordinated by Mr. Bijaya Kumar Kabi in association with its team members. More than 200 participants comprising of school students, teachers, local communities, villagers, visitors etc have been enjoyed the programme.



Sea Turtle Educational Programme for school students and communities

The school students and teachers have been learned about science and marine turtles, spending time at the beach. The participants have been explored the habitat of world's vanishing species and learn how they can help protect endangered sea turtles and their habitat, from the brink of extinction.

B) Beach Clean and Sea Turtle Educational Programme at Siali

Armed with blue garbage bags and gloves, the school students of Binapani high school, Olarah, members of Dolagovind Jew Youth club, Siali, community volunteers and members of APOWA were there to clean up the turtle-nesting beach at Siali. It is also an important highly sporadic nesting ground for sea turtles. The clean up event included briefing on the importance of beach cleaning, garbage collection and its proper disposal. On behalf of forest department, Mr. Dilip Mohanty and Subash ch Behera were participated the programme.



Beach Cleaning programme in association with community volunteers at Siali

The field workers along with the local volunteers and members of local youth club carried out the beach clean work every afternoon for an hour. Garbage on the beach, such as plastic, polythene bags, clothes and other debris were cleared from the beach for safely nesting of turtles. This movement will be continued for a month. As it is an important tourists place, the beach pollution levels are high than other beaches. So, we shall work for a month to clean the debris from this nesting beach.

C) Public Awareness:

The public awareness programme, through which residents and visitors are informed about the plight of the Olive Ridley turtle and how they can utilize the beaches without disturbing turtles and nests. The Public Awareness programme has been conducted in a variety of formats: display of turtle hoardings, community meetings, involvement of school children, informing visitors on the beaches etc. In addition, our Turtle Guards are regularly informing and educating beach visitors in the course of their monitoring duties.

D) Nesting Beach Patrolling and monitoring:

A large part of this project work is devoted to direct protection of the turtles and their habitat. The volunteers from the sea side villages have been appointed as Turtle Guards for 24x7 Nest & turtle protection along the major nesting sites.



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK:

Please support to APOWA's community based sea turtle and their habitat conservation programme. It provides desperately needed conservation programmes, nest and habitat protection as well as vital fishermen education at the world's largest olive ridley nesting sites of the region.

1. Become a Friend of Olive Ridley

For as little as you can directly support APOWA's sea turtle conservation work. Your contribution will be used to directly support our sea turtle conservation efforts by providing essential field equipment, and educational materials.

Benefits include:

- Bi-Monthly updates on the projects, species, communities and issues that form APOWA's conservation work
- Annual Progress Reports showing how your support is making a difference
- Special opportunities to participate in hands-on conservation work throughout the region

2. Become a Collaborator in Conservation

Your organization or family can make a lasting commitment to conservation by joining as a Collaborator in Conservation and help protect the sea turtles and their vital habitats! Sea turtles throughout the world are classified as endangered—and need your help! They are umbrella species (protecting the important umbrella species and preserving their habitat helps to protect a number of other species that depend on the same habitat).

3. Volunteer!

APOWA works with many community volunteers in its project site who support our work and would love to become more personally involved. If you would like to join this team or volunteer for us at your own place, here's your chance! We have ongoing volunteer opportunities ranging from, beach patrolling and monitoring, event planning, fundraising, assisting with environmental education, material development, and more! If you would like to learn more about these opportunities, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact us.

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