Olive ridley is the most widespread sea turtle on India's coasts: WII

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News

A pan-India assessment of sea turtles by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change found that the olive ridley is the most widespread sea turtle along India's mainland coast. It also recorded leatherback turtles nesting at Galathea Bay on Great Nicobar Island.

Background

- The olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea) is the most abundant sea turtle in the world and the smallest of the five found in India. It is Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and is in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- It is famous for mass nesting ("arribada") in Odisha at Gahirmatha, Rushikulya and the Devi river mouth. The Indian Coast Guard runs "Operation Olivia" to protect them; trawlers are asked to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs).
- India has five sea turtle species: olive ridley, green, hawksbill, leatherback and loggerhead. WII (Dehradun, 1982) is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The leatherback (Dermochelys coriacea) is the largest of all turtles and the only sea turtle without a hard shell; it mainly eats jellyfish. Galathea Bay is the proposed site of the transshipment port under the Great Nicobar Holistic Development Project.

Tamil Nadu link: Olive ridleys nest along the Chennai coast; the Students' Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN) has run night walks and hatcheries there since 1988, and the Tamil Nadu Forest Department runs hatcheries along the coast.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

A pan-India assessment of sea turtles by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change found that the olive ridley is the most widespread sea turtle along India's mainland coast.

What is the background to this news?

The olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea) is the most abundant sea turtle in the world and the smallest of the five found in India.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. As per the WII study, which sea turtle is most widespread on India's coasts?

A) Green turtle

B) Olive ridley

C) Hawksbill

D) Leatherback

Answer: B – Explanation: The WII study found the olive ridley to be the most widespread along India's coast.

2. What is the synchronised mass nesting of some sea turtles called?

A) Aestivation

B) Arribada

C) Migration

D) Hibernation

Answer: B – Explanation: In an arribada (Spanish for 'arrival'), thousands nest together.

3. Gahirmatha, famous for mass nesting of sea turtles, is in which State?

A) Tamil Nadu

B) Andhra Pradesh

C) Odisha

D) West Bengal

Answer: C – Explanation: Gahirmatha, Rushikulya and the Devi river mouth in Odisha are key nesting sites.

4. Which Indian Coast Guard operation protects nesting sea turtles?

A) Operation Olivia

B) Operation Samudra Setu

C) Operation Kaveri

D) Operation Sankalp

Answer: A – Explanation: Sankalp – Gulf shipping security; Kaveri – Sudan evacuation; Samudra Setu – COVID-era repatriation.

5. Where is the Wildlife Institute of India located?

A) Coimbatore

B) Kolkata

C) Bhopal

D) Dehradun

Answer: D – Explanation: WII – Dehradun; IIFM – Bhopal; SACON – Coimbatore; ZSI – Kolkata.