



Olive Ridley Turtles

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Why in News

Preparations are almost done at the **Rushikulya rookery on the Odisha coast** to welcome and protect olive ridley turtles during mass nesting.

Key Points

- Olive Ridley Turtles are the **smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles** found in the world, **inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans**.
- These turtles, along with the **Kemps ridley turtle**, are best known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada** (mass-nesting event when thousands of turtles come ashore at the same time to lay eggs on the same).
- They are **carnivores**.

Note:

The coast of Odisha in India is the **largest mass nesting site for the Olive-ridley**, followed by the coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica.

Protection Status

- **Vulnerable** according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).
- Listed in **Appendix I of CITES**.
- Under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

Threats

- **Unfriendly fishing practices:** The accidental killing of adult turtles through entanglement in trawl nets and gill nets due to uncontrolled fishing during their mating season around nesting beaches.

- The Odisha government has made it mandatory for trawls to use **Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs)**, a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.
However, this has been strongly opposed by the fishing communities as they believe TEDs result in loss of a considerable amount of the catch along with the turtle.
- Development and exploitation of nesting beaches for ports and tourist centres.

Rushikulya River

- It originates from Rushikulya hills of the Eastern Ghats in Phulbani district (Odisha).
- It is 165 kms. long with 8900 sq.kms of catchment areas.
- It covers the entire catchment area in the districts of Kandhamal and Ganjam district of Odisha.

Source: TH