



# Mass Nesting of Olive Ridley Turtles

## Why in News?

The Rushikulya beach in India's Odisha state recently witnessed the **highest-ever congregation of [Olive Ridley sea turtles](#) in the past few decades.**

- Millions of baby turtles have emerged from their eggshells and started their journey towards the Bay of Bengal using vast seawater routes.

## Why is this significant?

- The **Rushikulya beach is not a wildlife sanctuary**, yet turtles feel safe to carry out mass nesting.
  - The successful mass nesting and hatching **indicates a healthy marine ecosystem** and a conducive environment for sea turtles to lay eggs.
  - The successful hatching of many Olive Ridley turtles is a **positive sign for their conservation.**

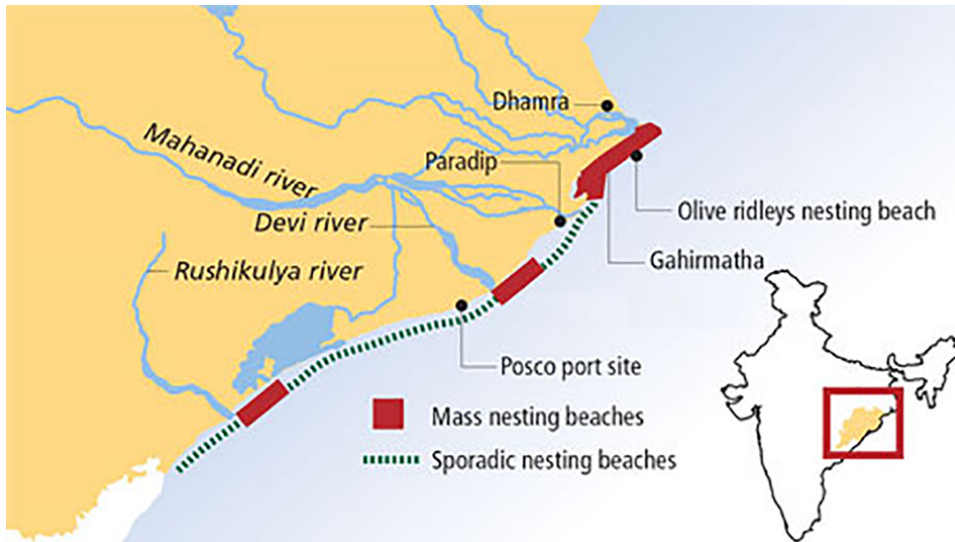
## What are Olive Ridley Turtles?

- **About:**
  - The Olive ridley turtles are the **smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles** found in the world.
  - These turtles are **carnivores** and get their name from their **olive-colored carapace.**
  - They are best known for their **unique mass nesting called Arribada**, where thousands of females **come together on the same beach to lay eggs.**



- **Habitat:**
  - They are found in **warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans.**

- **Odisha's [Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary](#)** is known as the **world's largest rookery (a colony of breeding animals) of sea turtles.**



#### ▪ **Protection Status:**

- **[Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:](#)** Schedule 1
- **[IUCN Red List:](#)** Vulnerable
- **[CITES:](#)** Appendix I

#### ▪ **Initiatives to Protect Olive Ridley Turtles:**

- **Operation Olivia:**
  - Every year, the **Indian Coast Guard's "[Operation Olivia](#)"**, initiated in the early 1980s, helps **protect Olive Ridley turtles as they congregate along the Odisha coast** for breeding and nesting from November to December.
    - It also **intercepts unlawful trawling activities.**
- **Mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs):**
  - To reduce **accidental killing in India**, 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.
- **Tagging:**
  - The **tagging of the endangered Olive Ridley turtles** using non-corrosive metal tags is done to enable scientists to chart their movements and know the areas they visit to protect the species and their habitats.

#### **Note:**

- **[Behler Turtle Conservation Award](#)**, established in 2006, is a major annual international award honoring excellence in the field of tortoise and freshwater turtle conservation. It is considered the "[Nobel Prize](#)" of Turtle Conservation.
- It is **presented annually by the Turtle Survival Alliance, IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, Turtle Conservancy, and Turtle Conservation Fund.**

### **What are the Threats Faced by Olive Ridley Turtles?**

- **Human Activities:** **Coastal development, fishing, and pollution** along with destruction of their nesting habitats and accidental capture in fishing nets.
- **Predators:** Natural predators such as **dogs, hyenas, and birds of prey** that **often feed on eggs or hatchlings.**
- **Climate Change:** Rising **temperatures and sea levels impact nesting habitats**, making it difficult to lay eggs.

- **Light Pollution:** [Artificial lights](#) from nearby towns and industries can disorient hatchlings, causing them to move away from the sea and towards nearby villages.

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

**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)**

**Source: TH**

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