



Olive Ridley Turtle

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the **traditional Chinese sky lantern festival** has **sparked outrage among environmentalists and wildlife conservationists** as it was scheduled near a nesting site of the **endangered Olive Ridley turtles**.

- As per **environmentalists**, the **bamboo or metal wire frame** of these lanterns takes months to decompose and acts as a **trap for wildlife, fish, dolphins, birds, and turtles**.

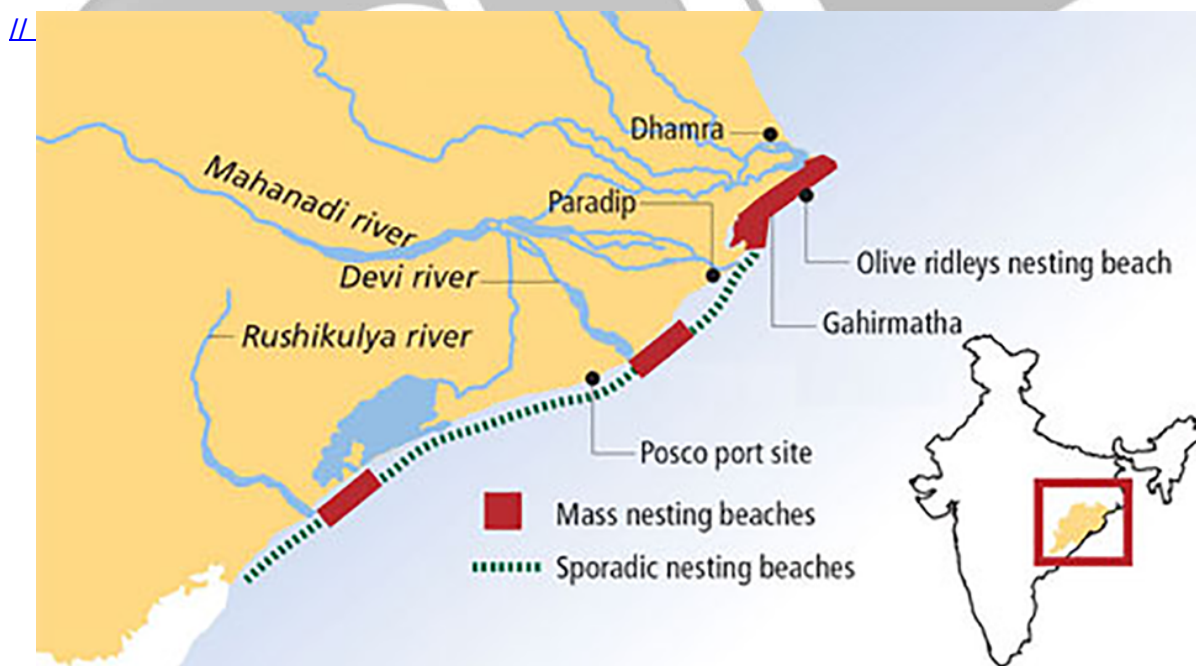
What are Olive Ridley Turtles?

▪ About:

- These turtles **are [carnivores](#)** and get their name from their **olive-coloured 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 that allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.
 - **Tagging:**
 - The tagging of the 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.

Sky Lantern Festival Glowfest:

- This sky-lantern festival is celebrated in **China and other Asian countries** that **honours deceased ancestors** on the 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar.
- This festival aims to promote reconciliation, peace, and forgiveness.
- It is celebrated by **releasing candle-lit paper lanterns into the sky.**

What are the Threats Faced by Olive Ridley Turtles?

- Coastal development projects, such as the **construction of seawalls, resorts, and ports**, destroy nesting beaches and reduce **foraging grounds** for olive ridley turtles.
- They are **accidentally caught in fishing gear**, such as gillnets, trawls, and longlines. This can injure or kill the turtles.
- **Raccoons, crabs, birds, and foxes** can raid olive ridley turtle nests and predate on the eggs affecting their population growth.
- Warmer ocean temperatures can also **disrupt the sex ratios of hatchlings**, producing more females.
- They can often **consume plastic bags** in search of foods like for jellyfish, and ingest them, leading to **blockages and starvation.**
- **Artificial lights** from nearby towns and industries can disorient hatchlings, causing them to move away from the sea and towards nearby villages.

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**



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#FewTurtleSpecies

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)

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