

# **Olive Ridley Turtles**

### Why in News

Researchers of the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** are carrying out **tagging of Olive Ridley turtles at three mass nesting sites** – Gahirmatha, Devi River mouth and Rushikulya.

• The **exercise was undertaken in Odisha in January 2021** after a span of about 25 years and 1,556 turtles had been tagged.





## **Key Points**

- Tagging and its Significance:
  - The metal tags affixed to turtles are non-corrosive, which can be removed later and they
    do not harm their body.
  - The tags are **uniquely numbered containing details** such as the name of the organisation, country-code and email address.
  - If researchers in other countries come across the tagged turtles, they will email their location in longitude and latitude to researchers in India. There is an established network working on turtles.
  - It would help them identify the migration path and places visited by the marine reptiles after congregation and nesting.
- 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.
    - The Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary is known as the world's largest

#### rookery (colony of breeding animals) of sea turtles.



#### Protection Status:

- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Scheduled 1
- **IUCN Red List**: Vulnerable
- CITES: Appendix I
- Threats:
  - · Marine pollution and waste.
  - **Human Consumption:** They are extensively poached for their meat, shell and leather, and eggs.
  - **Plastic Garbage:** An ever-increasing debris of plastics, fishing nets, discarded nets, polythene and other garbage dumped by tourists and fishing workers.
  - **Fishing Trawlers:** Overexploitation of marine resources by use of trawlers often violates the rule to not fish 20 kilometers within a marine sanctuary.
    - There were injury marks on many dead turtles indicating they could have been trapped under trawls or gill nets.
- 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.

#### **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**

- It is a subordinate organization of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, established in 1916.
- It is a national centre for faunistic survey and exploration of the resources leading to the advancement of knowledge on the exceptionally rich faunal diversity of the country.
- It has its headquarters at Kolkata and 16 regional stations located in different geographic locations of the country.

**Source: TH** 

