

# STATUS OF OLIVE RIDLEY SEA TURTLE ALONG THE CHENNAI COAST, SOUTHEASTERN INDIA



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CHENNAI COAST, SOUTHEASTERN INDIA**

*REPORT*

To  
The SACON  
John  
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## **SUMMARY**

The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT) with funding from the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS) initiated a countrywide sea turtle monitoring during 2003-04. Major activities of this project were (1) monitoring of sea turtle nesting in select beaches (2) molecular genetic analysis (3) Satellite telemetry studies and (4) networking and training of stake-holders in sea turtle monitoring and conservation. As a part of this project, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) has undertaken the monitoring of turtle nesting along the Kerala and Tamilnadu coasts. In this report, we present overall scenario of Olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) nesting along the Chennai coast. The status of Olive ridley was determined by studying the habitat available for nesting, monitoring the beach for carcasses of turtles, nests and predation. Salient findings of this study are given below.

- The Chennai- Pondicherry coast is mainly sandy with no rocky outcrops. Fishing villages are present at regular interval.
- Marine turtles arrive the coastal waters of Chennai during end of December and continue to be there till around early April.
- An estimated 11.7 nests/ km was obtained for Mamallapuram- Pondicherry beach (50 km), whereas it was 8.3 nests/ km for Besant Nagar - Neelankarai (6 km).
- Mortality of turtles was high along the Mamallapuram- Pondicherry coast compared to Besant Nagar-Neelankari. A total of 139 carcasses including five Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and 134 Olive ridleys were observed in the former beach. Drowning of the entangled turtles in the gill nets was one of the major reasons for their mortality.
- Of the 36 nests recorded along Mamallapuram- Pondicherry, 25 (65.8 %) were found poached, and the rest were found intact with clear signs of nesting.

The future of Olive ridleys along this coast will depend on the reduction of incidental catches in fishing nets, protection and restoration of nesting habitats, *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation programmes, reduction of pollution, a sound management plan for conservation with participation of the local community and non invasive research.