

manage to retain their ancestral lands, secure an income through good quality tourism and preserve their environment. The villagers from Tembawado are convinced, but not those from Vithaldaswado.

Although the incidence of nesting appears to be increasing, the past year has witnessed high mortality of hatchlings due to flooding of seawater over the nests. Villagers believe that this could be a fall-out of the global warming phenomenon, which is also leading to increased erosion of sand dunes in Morjim by high tides.

The villagers are aware that this is only the beginning and that they will have to face bigger threats in trying to protect the olive ridley turtle. However, they take heart from the fact that they have become the leaders of the turtle conservation movement that is catching on in Goa. Galgibag beach in South Goa has started following in Morjim's footsteps since last year and the number

of hatchlings that have been released from Galgibag this year has touched 573 hatchlings from seven nests so far. A great beginning!

(This article is based on the current study that is being carried out by Ms. Roshni Kutty as part of a Directory of Community Conserved Areas in India)

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A preliminary survey of sea turtles along the coast of Maharashtra and Goa

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A preliminary survey was carried out along the coast of Goa and Maharashtra from May 13 –31, 2000. Twenty five localities in Maharashtra and nine in Goa were visited. The objective of the survey was to collect information from secondary sources such as local people, fishermen, forest officials, fisheries department, trawler owners and workers and local non government organisations. The survey commenced from the Goa coast. Most of the sites visited in each district represent the southern and northern limits of that district which gives the idea of distribution pattern of marine turtles in that district.

Status in Goa

The Forest Department has created awareness regarding the sea turtles through media and newspapers. Thus the people in Goa were aware about this group. While interviewing various people in Goa, it was noticed that they were willing to talk about all the marine fauna other than the sea turtles. In Goa, there are two main nesting sites of olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*): one at Morjim, North Goa and another at Galgibag, South Goa. Both these sites are protected by the forest department with the help of local people. Apart from these sites, two less populated sites at Querim and Palolem may be potential breeding sites of marine turtles and are

to be surveyed during the breeding season. The main threat to marine turtles in Goa is egg poaching by humans and incidental catch in trawler nets.

Status in Maharashtra

A total of 25 localities from three coastal districts of Maharashtra were visited. In Maharashtra, the marine turtles nest on the entire coast. All the sites visited have recent nesting records. As per the information gathered from the locals, the population of turtles has drastically declined in

the last 10 years. At most of the sites the locals informed us that earlier 15 to 20 turtles used to visit each beach for nesting every year but now the number is reduced to less than five. A site at Harehwar in Raigad district has good potential. Besides this, beaches at Shiroda-Aravali and Motemal have good nesting records and these are to be surveyed during the forthcoming breeding season. The population of the marine turtles in Maharashtra is under serious threat due to indiscriminate poaching of eggs by humans and incidental catch in fishing nets.

News from Orissa

There was both good and bad news during the 1999 – 2000 season in Orissa. The supercyclone in October, 1999 crippled much of the state's machinery and many conservation organizations including Operation Kachhapa were involved in providing cyclone relief. Consequently, conservation of sea turtles was not exactly a priority. It is believed that more than 20, 000 olive ridleys died during this season as a consequence of trawling related mortality. (*The Orissa high court in its May 14, 1998, judgement in a case of WWF India Vs. State of Orissa had ordered that all fishing trawlers be equipped with*

turtle excluder devices (TEDs) to avoid turtles being caught in their nets). However, in late March, mass nesting did take place at the Nasi islands off the Gahirmatha coast. This again is no cause to celebrate as the islands have become even more fragmented and narrow after the supercyclone and much of the nesting area is constantly inundated, resulting in very low hatching success. Conservation initiatives and enforcement of nearshore mechanized fishing bans have to be implemented with greater vigour in the coming season if mortality is to be reduced.

More news from Dhamra

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On 22nd September, a division bench of Honourable Orissa High Court consisting of Honourable Mr. Justice P.C. Naik and Justice Mr. P.K. Mohanty after hearing the submissions of Sri Raj Panjwani, Advocate issued notices to:

- Ministry of Surface Transport, Government of India,

- Ministry of Environment, Government of India
- International Sea Ports Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Forest and Environment Dep't., Government of Orissa
- Chief Wildlife Warden, Orissa