

HERP NEWS

First Turtle Tagging

Perhaps the earliest record of turtle tagging is mentioned in J W Bennet's "Ceylon and its Capabilities" (London, 1843). In 1794 a Dutch gentleman tagged turtles (probably greens, *Chelonia mydas* with riveted brass rings about 2/3 inches wide, with a legend in Dutch and Malay. In 1826 a ring was brought to Bennet from a 400 lb turtle that visited the same cove for 32 years (Turtle Cove, 10 miles from Yala, on the east coast). The author added his initials and the date on the ring and released the turtle.

Leatherback Hatchery at Yala National Park

The Wildlife and Nature Protection Society of Ceylon maintains a leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) hatchery at their bungalow outside Yala National Park. During egg laying season nests are bought from commercial collectors and the eggs transplanted and incubated at the hatchery. The average hatching percentage has been some 60%.

Progress of the FAO/UNDP Crocodile Project

Dr M V Subba Rao has written about the UNDP Crocodile Project in the October '77 issue of Science Today. "When the project started in late '75, there were only 60 to 70 gharial in India; within a year, 450 babies were being reared. At present, some 1400 gharials are growing in various sanctuaries... More interestingly, seven PhD scholars are working with Dr Bustard (the UNDP/FAO expert) along with 1500 tribal workers." The project envisages that once the Satkosia Gorge (a gharial sanctuary) is restocked, the annual profit from skins alone will be as high as Rs. 1,500,000. Crocodile meat, a delicacy in countries such as Japan, may fetch upto Rs 40 a kg.

Snake Park in Tirunelveli

A Trustee of the Madras Snake Park, Dr M V Rajendran, is constructing a snake park in Tirunelveli. The Nellai Snake Park, as it will be called, has financial support from several local businessmen, and will serve as a public education center.

Crocodile Sanctuary

The Government of Uttar Pradesh has plans to create a sanctuary for the gharial on the Chambal River. The project will be financed by the Center.

Crocodile Farm Washed Away

The recent floods on the Cauvery river have washed away the Kilikudi Crocodile Farm near Grand Anicut; there are no signs of the crocodiles.

From Columbia, South America

Prof Frederico Medem of the Instituto Roberto Franco writes in a letter dated 15th October '77: "I also had an unexpected case of egg laying. A hybrid between the Dwarf and the Smooth-Fronted Caiman (*Paleosuchus palpebrosus* and *P. trigonatus*) collected from the wild in 1968, laid 12 eggs on September 27, '77. I observed her behaviour daily for four or five hours (amounting more leaves, etc) but since three days she stopped. Apparently the nest has now the desired form. Hatching should take place about the 27th of December."

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