Habitat

Sea turtles belong to the unique group of ancient reptiles which evolved with the dinosaurs and lived through many forms of exploitations over the centuries, writes Kartik Shanker

Survival of the ancient mariners

The moon lingers over a night-lit beach as the moonrakers begin to haul the turtle eggs into the sand. The turtle eggs are incubated by the heat of the sun and their own metabolism. They hatch after about 50 days, the little hatchlings breaking out with the help of an "egg tooth." After hatching, they make their way in juvenile frenzy and at the next tidal rolled, they move up out of the nest and into the sea.

Once out of the nest, the hatchlings locate the sea by a number of cues, the brighter horizon (the reflection of moonlight on the water) being a primary one. In the water, they use their stored resources and swim frantically looking for a suitable site.

Having found one, they begin to dig with their hind flippers. Slowly scooping the sand out, they build a flask-shaped nest, about one and a half feet deep. They lay 100 to 150 eggs in the nest, soft, round eggs, the size of ping pong balls. The nest is filled with sand and dumped down with the help of authorities and the hatched hatchlings.

To the sea, a unique group of ancient reptiles which evolved with the dinosaurs. Today, there are eight species in the world. Over the centuries, they have been systematically exploited. The Leatherback, the biggest of all turtles, has been killed indiscriminately for its carapace (shell) which is used to make cosmetics. It is known as the "soup turtle." The leatherback, the "prize" of the turtles, has been killed indiscriminately for its carapace (shell) which is used to make cosmetics. It is known as the "soup turtle." The leatherback, the prize of the turtles, has been killed indiscriminately for its carapace (shell) which is used to make cosmetics. It is known as the "soup turtle."

The Olive Ridley

The Olive Ridley, the loggerhead — have been explored for their eggs and meat.

Although the sea turtles live their whole life in the sea, they are forced to come onto land for reproduction. The loggerhead turtles have a different breeding period, and they often migrate thousands of kilometers from one place to another. For instance, the Green turtles from the Brazilian coast migrate to the Ascension Islands in the middle of the Atlantic to nest. The mechanism by which these turtles locate these small islands in the middle of the ocean is still largely unknown. However, they are believed to have compass sense and map sense. They may use the geomagnetic field, ocean surface and chemical cues.

Sea turtles are magnificent swimmers, swimmers, swimmers, and the deepest diving vertebrates, with dive depth of more than 1600 feet below the surface. They are even known to incubate underwater.

After nesting, they return to their feeding grounds until the next year. There is a myth that the female meat offshore, gather their hatchlings on her back and takes them back, but in fact there is no parental care. The eggs are past the breakers. Turtles nesting on the coast are extinct due to the island’s mode of nesting and the fact that it nests during the dry season, but nesting during the rainy season is not unusual. The Kemp's Ridley is the most common species and is found nesting on most of the Indian coast.

An interesting phenomenon called the ambush occurs in the

Adverse factors have been found in the poaching and egg collection. There are fishing villages dotting the coastline, and in other places, the leatherbacks were not harmed as it was revered. Only the eggs were poached and this too by a particular group. Of late, though, the fishermen have taken to poaching as a supplementary source of income. At times, batches of fish have been rapidly poached.

SSITCN volunteers walk the beach at night, in competition with the poachers — to collect nests and relocate them in a hatchery further down. The eggs are incubated in the sand naturally and hatchlings released into the sea.

They have released more than 50,000 hatchings since 1988, when the group was formed. The programme also includes educating students about conservation in general and involving them in the conservation of the Ridley.

A problem with hatchlings is the prediction of sex determination in sea turtles. In turtles and some other reptiles, the sex of the offspring is not determined by the temperature of incubation. In turtles, there is a so-called "hatchers," all hatchlings develop as females and below which all develop as males. Since one has no control over this and sex exists in the wild should not be altered by human interference. The best method of conservation would be to protect the nests in their natural habitat.

Technically, all species of sea turtles are protected by law. They are classified as Endangered and Endangered. Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) andEndPoint (CITES) and the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act. However, the turtles are still being affected adversely, directly and indirectly. And while people the world over are doing nothing to help or hinder the survival of sea turtles, these ancient survivors continue their cross-oceanic journeys as they have been.