

# BI-MONTHLY REPORT ON SEA TURTLE AND THEIR HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAMME [APRIL 2011 to MAY 2011]

## **Background:**

Sea Turtles, one of the oldest living species on this planet are a symbol of wisdom in many cultures. These species use a wide range of habitats, thus playing a critical role for the conservation of the oceans' ecosystems and diversity. Every year Orissa is stunning with the arrival, mass nesting and hatching of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles. Orissa



Journey of baby turtles towards the sea

is one of the three most important nesting sites for the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle around the world. After mating in offshore waters, females come ashore to lay their eggs. The hatchlings normally emerge after a period of about 45-50 days or so later when tiny baby turtles emerge from the nest and take their first intrepid steps towards the sea. They have a long journey ahead of them; some will not survive the treacherous journey, others will travel thousands of ocean miles to return as adults and complete the cycle.

## **Helping Hand:**

Over the years, APOWA (Action for Protection of Wild Animals) has been working for the conservation of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles and their habitat in Orissa coast. With our sustained campaign, commitment and combined strongly with field protection, networking with fishermen communities, comprehensive innovative education programmes, the result has been advantageous. They are umbrella species (protecting the important umbrella species and preserving their habitat helps to protect a number of other species that depend on the same habitat). APOWA carries out all of these programmes with the collective hard work of its highly skilled and dedicated workforce. .

## **Summary of Activities :**

### **A) Rescue and safely release to disoriented Baby Turtles:**

The hatchlings normally emerge after a period of about 45-55 days depending upon the ambient sand temperature and climatic conditions. According to scientific research, only one out of every 1,000 survives to become an adult sea turtle. Turtle hatchlings normally emerge in the evening hours and night only and move towards the Sea under the cover of darkness. The artificial lights disorient them and make them travel towards the wrong way instead of the Sea. But, our turtle guards, volunteers and members have been taken care of this problem with the appropriate measurers at the nesting beaches of Siali, Ramtarpatana, Sandhakud, Padmapur. They had been rescued disoriented baby turtles and released them safely into the Sea. More than 2,00,000 hatchlings saved from predators and safely released back to the sea by the team. Unfortunately, some nests and eggs had lost due to beach erosion caused by strong summer winds and high waves and unseasonal rain in some beaches at Siali, Jagatsinghpur.



Hatchlings Emerging from pits

## B) Sea turtle awareness programme at fishing and coastal villages:

A major focus of the Olive ridley sea turtle conservation programme was involved a broadly based community awareness campaign and awareness about the need to protect the endangered Olive ridley turtles. The community awareness campaign's objective was to begin the difficult process of changing community perceptions and attitudes towards turtles. The public awareness programme, through which residents and visitors were informed about the plight of the olive ridley sea turtles and how they can utilize the beaches without disturbing turtles and nests. The awareness and education programme have organized at various places of the nesting areas. The public awareness programme has conducted in a variety of formats: publication of educational materials, informal community meetings, involvement of school children, inform visitors on the beaches etc.



Community meeting on Sea Turtle conservation organised at Siali, Jagatsinghpur

The important and perhaps most enjoyable activities were the education and community outreach work we have been done. The sea turtle awareness and education effort in the operational area directly reached at community through meetings and smaller scale village gatherings.

**Table 1. Number of People informed during APOWA's Community Awareness Programme**

Places	Pentha	Paradeep	Sandhakud	Siali
Activity				
Beach Patrols	-	653	346	520
Community Meetings	61	82	80	106
Information Stations	638	-	-	452



Sea Turtle Awareness to beach visitors at Information Station installed at Pentha beach

## C) TAG (Turtle Action Group) Training Workshop



Safely release of rescue turtles to sea

APOWA team has participated in Turtle Action Group's field training workshop on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at Rushikulya sea turtle rookery, Ganjam, one of the mass nesting sites of Olive Ridley Turtles. Turtle Action Group (TAG) is nation-wide network of Sea Turtle conservation organizations. The objective of the training programme was on safely release of hatchlings and management of nests. A group of technical experts from TAG was attended as resource person.

*For more information on how you can get involved, please contact*

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