



Turtle Conservation Guidelines

Eco-travel tips to conserve the Olive
Ridley Sea Turtle.

Orissa, 2010.

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Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)



Olive Ridley Sea Turtle

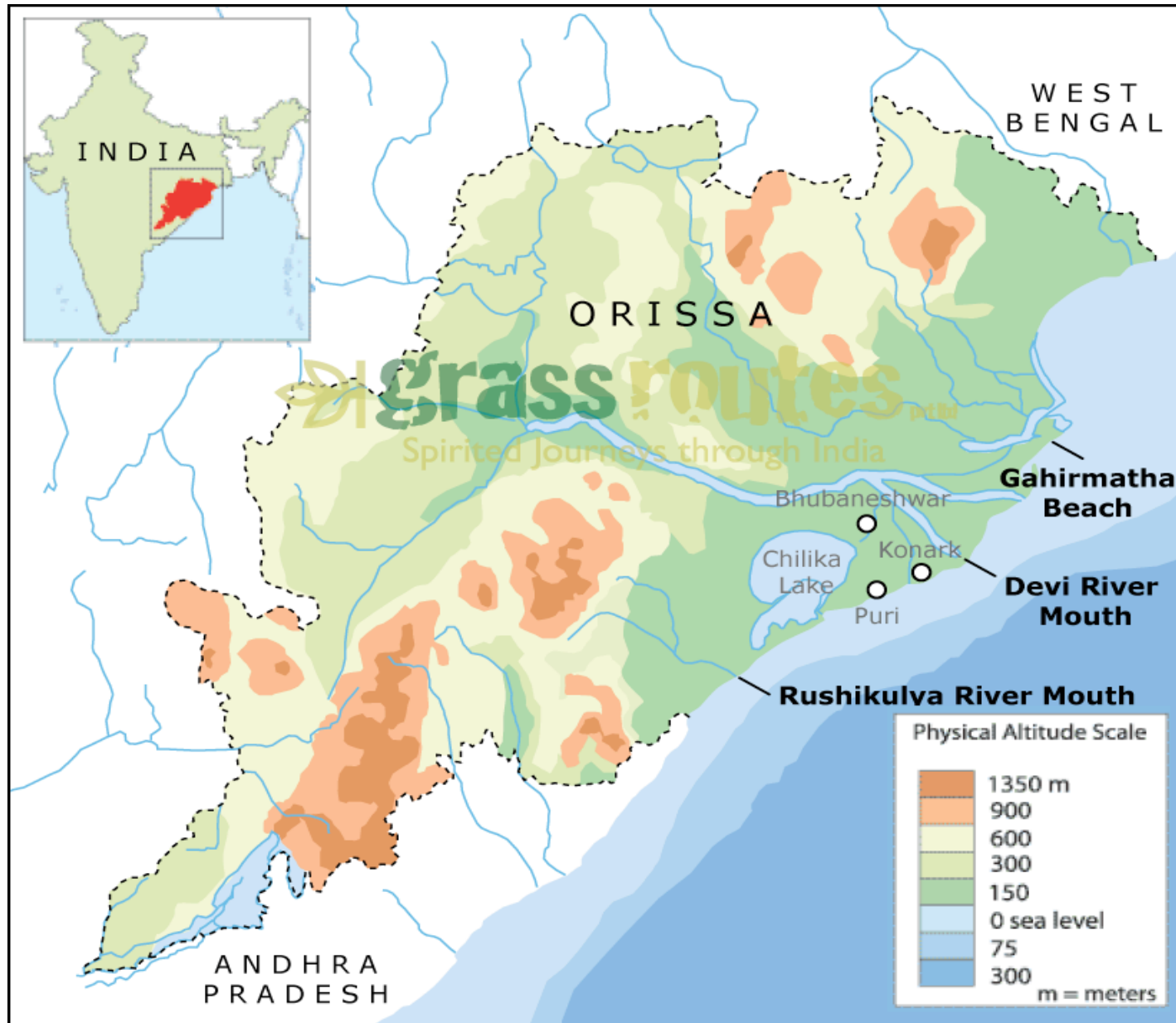
The Olive Ridley is one of the smallest species of sea turtle. It is named for the olive-green color of its heart-shaped shell.

Olive Ridley turtles are usually found in the Indo-Pacific and Atlantic oceans. They inhabit shallow coastal waters of India on the eastern seaboard (one of the four species found in Indian coastal waters, out of the seven that exist worldwide). The East Indian state of Orissa is the one of the most important “*arribadas*” (“*arrival*” in Spanish); mass arrival and nesting sites. Others occur in Costa Rica and Mexico. Popular nesting beaches in Orissa are *Devi*, *Gahirmatha* and *Rushikulya*.

The turtles in the Indian Ocean face considerable threat from predators and their numbers have also dwindled due to habitat degradation. Sand erosion, Pollution and trawler nets adversely affect adults. Eggs mostly fall prey to stray dogs, jackals, crabs and seagulls.

It is believed that Olive Ridley turtles nest on the beach where they hatched. If we protect our beaches, we could see increasing numbers of returning mothers.

Key Olive Ridley Nesting Sites in Orissa



How to take care during nesting:

- Every year after turtles mate in offshore waters, the females come ashore to synchronously lay their eggs.
- Turtles lay their eggs about 1 - 2 feet below ground level in the sands just above the high tide line on the coast.
- To protect the nests it may be necessary to fence off beaches. Nests may need to be relocated to safe zones where they can be monitored and protected from predators.
- When transporting the eggs to a safe incubation corral, use dark plastic bags (they do not absorb the protective coating around the egg & keep the eggs moist).
- Bury eggs identical to how the mother laid them. Nest must be same depth and shape. Eggs must face upwards. Hole carefully covered and labeled with the following information: species, hour and date of burial, number of eggs and estimated hatching date (45 days). This is best done in the supervision of experts.



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What can you do during hatching?

- Wear dark clothing (especially important if visiting hatching sites at night)
- No flash photography
- Wash your hands in ocean water to remove any foreign substance that could contaminate the turtles sensitive body.
- Release turtles on the shoreline (not directly into the ocean as this prevents the turtles from developing the memory required to return and lay eggs when they reach maturity). Years later, after traveling thousands of miles to distant feeding grounds, they return to their natal nesting beaches in Orissa and begin the cycle again.



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Local Conservation Efforts (Orissa)

- Local communities living nearby nesting sites participate in vital monitoring. Information is collected on mortality, local ecology and illegal fishing activities. This is useful for determining the survival of the species and contributes to national and international advocacy work.
- Education Awareness Campaigns are carried throughout the vicinity of nesting sites to increase understanding, awareness and to garner support.
- Local communities protect critical environments; ensure beaches are clear from obstruction and patrol the nesting sites.
- Rescue teams are trained by expert conservationists to save the Olive Ridley from dangers such as large fishing nets (especially trawler nets), dogs, seagulls and other predators.
- Local communities ensure the safe passage of thousands of babies during hatching.

Local Conservation Efforts (Orissa)



How can you get involved?



- Volunteer to help local community conservation efforts : lend a hand patrolling the beach, re-locating nests and releasing babies.
- Join us on beach camps, turtle watches and eco-tours.



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Bon Voyage!

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