

Nesting of Olive Ridley turtles at Chavakkad Beach

Sujit Sundaram*

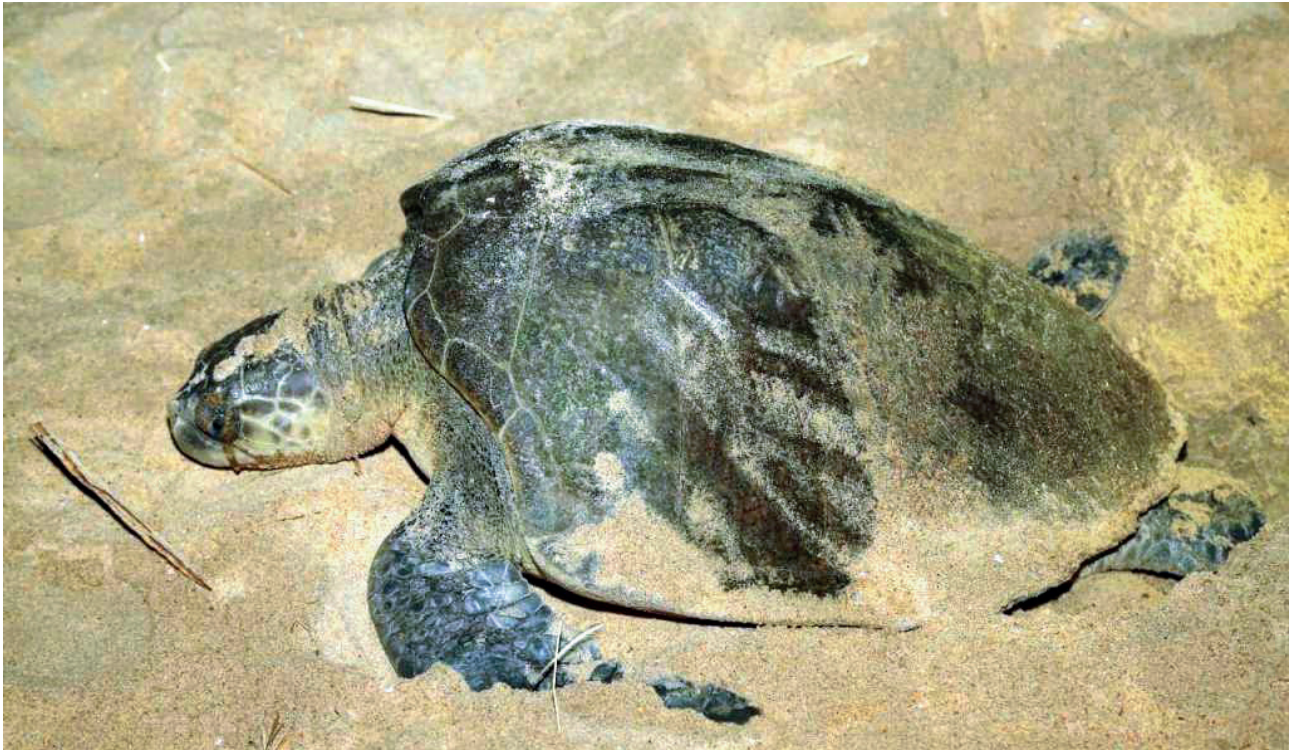
#Mumbai Research Centre of ICAR-CMFRI, Mumbai - 400 061, Maharashtra

*E-mail: sujitsundaram@hotmail.com

#Technical Officer (Retd.)

There are several reports on the nesting of Olive ridley turtles, *Lepidochelys olivacea* from the east coast of India and the Andaman Islands but similar reports for the west coast of India are scanty. Every year Olive ridley turtles nest during November to March with important sites being Panchavadi, Edakkazhiyur and Akalad beaches along Chavakkad coast in Kerala. The turtles come to the shore during night time to lay their eggs in pits created by scraping out sand with its hind flippers and after

covering the same with sand again, returns to the sea. It was found that jackals and stray dogs were digging the nests and devouring the eggs disrupting the recruitment of these turtles. Hence, volunteers of Green Habitat, an NGO committed to conservation, built a hatchery which was also used for education and public awareness programmes on turtle conservation. The collected eggs were transferred to this hatchery. During the breeding season of 2017-18, ten nests were saved from these three



nesting sites in Chavakkad. The clutch size varied from 40 to 129 eggs and the eggs hatched after 45-50 days. Out of 1025 eggs that were saved, 490 eggs hatched. Local people, fishermen, students, were invited when the baby turtles were released in to the sea (Plate 3). In Kerala turtle nesting has been reported from Puthen Kadappuram beach and Palapetty beach in Thrissur

district. Olive Ridley turtles are categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List (IUCN, 2010) and are included in Schedule-I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. To protect these turtles, use of trawlers and fishing nets during mating and nesting season should be regulated and awareness among fishermen should be created to release the accidentally caught turtles back into the sea.