

# Marine turtle conservation programs in villages of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra

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Maharashtra is active in sea turtle conservation and its citizen actions with support of forest department are highly commendable particularly in some regions of southern Maharashtra. During the surveys conducted at Harne and Kolthare villages of Ratnagiri in March 2019 it was observed that local volunteers known as “Kasav Mitra” identified by Forest Department, in Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra are undertaking beach patrolling and relocating the eggs to secured enclosures for multiple reasons such as the egg sites being too close to tide water level, beaches open to public that can result in eggs being unknowingly crushed by beachgoers, or dug up by dogs or targeted poaching.

On this coast, major nesting period of Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is between November to April every year. *Kasav Mitra* patrols the beach day and night for turtle nest. They dig out the eggs and move them into artificially made nest on the same beach. *In situ* preservation is also done if nest is found away from high tide water (Figs.1-2). In Anjarle Village near the Harne Port 8 nests were preserved in artificial hatchery on same seashore. During the survey on 22.03.2019 and 23.03.2019 in Kolthare Village, 23 nests were observed of which 10 were preserved *in situ* by setting wooden poles around the nest to protect the eggs from predatory dogs and jackals around. The eggs hatch after



Fig.1. *In situ* nest at Kolthare



Fig.2. Artificially made nest at Anjarle



Fig.3. Hatchlings of Olive ridley

45 to 65 days incubation (Fig.3). *Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra*, Chiplun (Ratnagiri) and Forest Department of Maharashtra (Ratnagiri District) plays an important role in guiding local

volunteers to protect and preserve this turtle. On 28.03.2019, a visit was made to this center to collect data of sea turtle hatchlings released to sea till date (Table 1).

Table 1. Details of sea turtle hatching collected

Village	Number of nests	Number of eggs protected	Number of hatchlings released
Anjarle Village	First Nest on : 01.02.2019 Last Nest on: 26.02.2019 Total Nests found 8	532	120
Kolthare Village	First Nest on 15.01.2019 Last Nest on 20.03.2019 Total Nests found 23	870 + <i>in situ</i> eggs	168