

Green turtle, *Chelonia mydas* rescued from Dabholi-Waingani Landing Centre, Maharashtra

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Sea turtles are found all along the coast of India including the Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Five species inhabit the Indian seas viz., *Dermochelys coriacea* (Leatherback turtle), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (Hawksbill turtle), *Chelonia mydas* (Green turtle), *Lepidochelys olivacea* (Olive ridly turtle) and *Caretta caretta* (Loggerhead turtle). Turtles are categorised as endangered in the IUCN Red List (IUCN, 2002) and are included in Schedule I of Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

On 26th February 2011, a huge green turtle, *Chelonia mydas* locally known as 'Hirve kasav' was



Green turtle, *Chelonia mydas* caught in shore-seine at Dabholi-Waingani

entangled in the *rampani* (shore-seine) net operated during 5 am to 7 am and the catch was landed on the beach at Dabholi-Waingani Landing Centre in Vengurla, Mahatashtra. Apart from the green turtle, the catch included crabs, juveniles of seerfish, mullets, mackerel, squid *etc.* The turtle was a female weighing around 250 kg with a carapace length of 153 cm and carapace width of 102 cm. The turtle was very active and with out much injury. The present record appears to be the largest recorded green turtle from Maharashtra waters.

The occurrence of olive ridley turtles is rare along this shore. As the news of the landing of the green turtle spread, local people flocked to the beach to have a glimpse as they venerate the turtle as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The fishermen in Dabholi-Waingani and nearby villages are aware that turtles are endangered and hence they actively take part in conservation of turtles. Moreover religious importance goes a long way in the implementation of conservational measures of turtles in India. The turtle was therefore released soon to the sea by the fishermen in the presence of forest department personnel.