

Green turtle, *Chelonia mydas* stranded at Malvan, Maharashtra

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Sea turtles are found all along the coast of India and five species of sea turtles are reported from Maharashtra viz., *Dermochelys coriacea* (Leatherback turtle), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (Hawksbill turtle), *Chelonia mydas* (Green turtle), *Lepidochelys olivacea* (Olive ridley) and *Caretta caretta* (Loggerhead turtle).

On 25th January 2013, a green turtle *Chelonia mydas* was observed stranded at Chivala beach, Malvan, Maharashtra (Fig. 1). It is locally known as

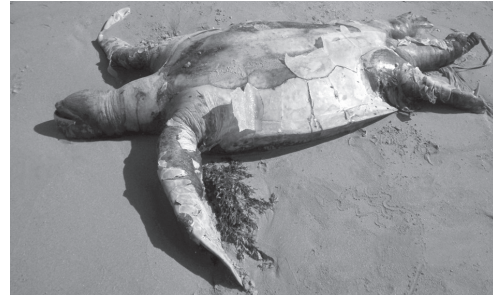


Fig. 1. Carcass of *Chelonia mydas* stranded at Malvan

'hirwa kasav'. The turtle measured 90 cm and weighed approximately 85 kg. The carcass was in a state of heavy decomposition. The local fishermen buried the carcass on the beach. Green turtles are known to nest at Ratnagiri, Alibag and Dahanu along the coast of Maharashtra.

There are reports on the accidental stranding and inadvertent landings of marine turtles along the Maharashtra coast, the details of which are provided in Table 1.

In India, live sea turtles especially *C. mydas* which is primarily a herbivore feeding on several species of sea grass is considered as an incarnation of Lord

Vishnu and if accidentally caught are usually released back into the sea by the local fishermen. This practice based on religious grounds, goes a long way in the conservational measures of turtles. *C. mydas* is categorised as endangered in the IUCN Red List (IUCN, 2002) and are included in Schedule I of Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Turtles are under severe threat from fishery related mortality, destruction of eggs and other threats related to development. The major methods to implement management strategies to conserve turtles are modification of shrimp gear such as incorporation of turtle exclusion device (TED), protection of nesting beaches, legislative regulations and public education.

Table 1. Instances of turtle landings along the coast of Maharashtra

Author	Year	Month	Place	Species	Sex	Carapace length (cm)	Weight (kg)	Mode of capture
Karbhari	1981	September	Mumbai	Hawksbill turtle	F	78.3	80.0	Gillnet
Karbhari	1985	April	Dev Bag	Leatherback turtle	—	149.8	100.0	Gillnet
Karbhari <i>et al.</i>	1984	April	Mumbai	Olive ridley turtle	M	63.0	48.0	Trawl net
Karbhari <i>et al.</i>	1984	September	Vasai	Olive ridley turtle	F	75.0	54.5	Bagnet
Karbhari <i>et al.</i>	1985	December	Pawas	Green turtle	M	51.2	38.0	Trawl net
Karbhari <i>et al.</i>	1984	April	Vasai	Green turtle	F	66.5	42.8	Bag net
Katkar	1988	April	Ratnagiri	Olive ridley turtle	—	60.0	25.5	Gillnet
Hotagi	1991	May	Bassien Koliwada	Olive ridley turtle	M	68.5	34.8	Bagnet
Katkar	1995	November	Ratnagiri	Olive ridley turtle	—	64.0	30.0	Hook and lines
Jadhav	1996	May	Janjira Murud	Olive ridley turtle	—	71.0	56.0	Stranded
Sujit Sundaram and Josekutty	2008	June	Mumbai	Olive ridley turtle	—	50.5	20	Stranded
	"	June	Mumbai	Olive ridley turtle	—	54.0	27	Hook and lines
	"	July	Mumbai	Olive ridley turtle	—	75.0	49	Stranded
Present report	2009	January	Malvan	Green turtle	—	95.0	80	Stranded