

**TURTLE NESTING SEASON COMES TO AN END,  
TAMIL NADU FOREST DEPARTMENT RELEASES RECORD NUMBER OF  
TURTLES**

Tamil Nadu with a coastline of 1076 Km has been historically visited by Sea Turtles for nesting. Five species of marine turtles namely Olive Ridley, Green turtles, Hawksbill turtles, Loggerhead turtles and Leatherback turtles are reported to visit the coast of Tamil Nadu. Out of these, the most prominent visitors are Olive-Ridley turtles, commonly nesting along the Coromandal coast and are known to forage in south Tamil Nadu waters, whereas nesting by other species of turtles is rare at present.

Every year, preparations for sea turtle season begins in Tamil Nadu in the month of November. Forest Department undertakes preparatory works, including making temporary hatcheries, organization of orientation programme for the staff and inter-departmental co-ordination meetings followed by daily night patrolling operations along with NGOs like Students Sea Turtle Conservation Nesting (SSCN) and other volunteers along with the staff and watchers of the Forest Department, specifically appointed for the purpose, wherein nests are identified and re-located in Forest Department hatcheries. This year during the Turtle nesting season the department established **53** hatcheries spread over in 8 divisions of 13 coastal districts. A total of **2363** nests were collected with 2,58,775 eggs, which were meticulously translocated to departmental hatcheries. Monitoring was carried out 24/7 in all these hatcheries right from the translocation till release of every hatchling. While doing so all the parameters were recorded including temperature of all the nests. The department released 2,15,778 hatchings this year, which is the highest ever recorded so far. Last year 1,82,917 hatchlings were released.

Districts of Cuddalore, Nagapattinam and Chennai saw the largest release at Cuddalore – 89648, Nagapattinam – 60438 and Chennai – 38230 respectively. This year, 185 field staff of the department and 264 volunteers actively participated in this Conservation exercise. In order to bolster the efforts of the Department, the Government of Tamil Nadu has already announced setting up of Sea-Turtle Conservation Centres at Chennai and Nagapattinam, which will further give impetus to the conservation efforts towards these species.

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