

T A Davis and Rajesh Bedi have very disturbing news about the widely publicized sea turtle rookery (one of the world's largest) at Gahirmatha in Orissa state. Their report, published in the Jan-March '78 issue of "Environmental Awareness" states that though the '76 nesting season (Jan-March) brought over 1,58,161 nesting female Lepidochelys olivacea ashore, not a single turtle nested on this beach in '77. The authors visited Gahirmatha on 12 February of this year, and saw hundreds of ridleys carcasses on the beach. Forest officials counted 478 dead turtles on a 14 km coastal stretch.

The carcasses, of both males and females, were 7-10 days old, and the fore-flippers of some were tied with wire. It is obvious that launches were responsible for this slaughter and the rotting animals at Gahirmatha must have been abandoned turtles that had died on board due to overcrowding and suffocation. The total number of ridleys' captured (apparently while mating) must be staggering.

This report again brings home the question of whether it is wise to publicize the habitats, nesting locations etc. of commercially valuable and endangered animals such as sea turtles. (In '76, several newspapers carried extensive reports about this nesting beach, which incidentally lies within the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary).

The Forest Department alone cannot handle this problem since the poachers have power launches operating several miles offshore. The Fisheries and naval personnel could provide valuable assistance in apprehending poachers and it is hoped that this possibility will be seriously investigated and implemented well before the '79 nesting season begins.

#### SATKOSHIA GORGE GHERIAL SANCTUARY

This year no egg incubation or hatchling collection programme will be undertaken at the Satkosha Gorge Sanctuary in Orissa. 72 gherial have been released into the Mahanadi during '77 and '78. 78 juveniles are now being reared to be released in February '79.

#### EGG COLLECTION IN THE ANDAMANS

Binod Choudhury was in the Andaman Islands in June in order to collect C. porosus eggs for the FAO/UNDP/Govt of India crocodile project. The one nest brought back will be incubated and the young reared at Hyderabad Zoo in Andhra Pradesh.

#### MUGGER EGG COLLECTION

In Tamil Nadu this year the State Forest Dept. succeeded in collecting over 700 mugger eggs. Hatching success was over 50%, with a total of over 800 hatchlings and juveniles now being reared at state rearing stations.