

(66)

1985

CRIPPS

VOL. 82, No. 1, PP: 212-213

23. ON THE INFANTILE MORTALITY OF OLIVE RIDLEY.
LEPIDOCHELYS OLIVACEA (ESCHCHOLTZ) IN CAPTIVITY

The Pacific (Olive) Ridley, *Lepidochelys olivacea* (Eschcholtz) is an endangered species. So, attempts are being made to rear and rehabilitate this species at Bhagabatpur Crocodile Rearing Centre, Sunderbans, West Bengal.

In the course of rearing, 117 Ridley hatchlings emerged from their artificial nests at Bhagabatpur within a hatching span of 6 days with effect from May 17 to May 22, 1983. Of these, 99 healthy hatchlings were released and 18 were segregated for study (Banerjee 1984). Of the 18 hatchlings 3 had certain developmental abnormalities, namely 2 had unusually bent carapace and one had no eyes. But, within a month, i.e. by June 17, 1983, the abnormal Ridleys along with 2 other weak hatchlings died.

On June 19, 1983, there was an outbreak of skin infection among juvenile Ridleys similar to that reported by Whitaker (1982). It was treated successfully with Terramycin

Antigerm-77 solution by July 7, 1983 without any mortality (Banerjee 1984). But, since then, one hatchling went off its food and consequently showed stunted growth. It completely stopped feeding and died on August 16, 1983.

One healthy hatchling was found dead on July 13, 1983. Post-mortem report revealed internal haemorrhage and injury to heart. It happened due to an accident during pool cleaning and was not unfortunately brought to our notice.

One hatchling with bifurcated fore flipper also showed retarded growth in comparison to others. This juvenile turtle stopped feeding a week after the disappearance of the second attack of skin infection and died on April 12, 1984. The post-mortem report revealed enlargement of liver.

To date, i.e. over a period of one year, the total infantile mortality rose to 8 (44.4%) and 10 yearlings are surviving.

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

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