

A SPOTLIGHT ON ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra Pradesh, with a coastline of about a 1000 km, is one of the most important maritime states of the country. Since it is just south of Orissa, it has particular significance for the thousands of turtles migrating through its coastal waters each year. While no mass nesting sites have been confirmed in this state, there are anecdotal accounts of large mating and nesting aggregations (of perhaps a few 100 turtles) at Sacramento in central Andhra and at Kopaskudd in northern Andhra Pradesh. Srikurmam, in northern Andhra, is historically significant, as it has a unique temple dedicated to *kurma avatar*, the incarnation of Vishnu as a turtle. There is significant trawling related mortality in the state, with over a 1000 turtles being killed each year along its coast. A few studies by P.S. Rajasekhar, Andhra University, Vishakapatnam and KVR Priyadarshini, a WWF conservation corp

volunteer, have provided information on nesting and mortality along this coast, particularly northern Andhra Pradesh. A few NGOs such as Green Mercy, Vishaka Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Marine Turtle Preservation Group, Hyderabad, have been active in the conservation of turtles. Several other organisations have been active in working on coastal issues and with fisherfolk. In this issue, we have a report from Green Mercy on their conservation activities and a preliminary report from the GOI UNDP Sea Turtle Project on its survey in the state. We also present a profile of some of the NGOs working on coastal issues in the state.

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Editor

Conservation of sea turtles in northern Andhra Pradesh

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Green Mercy is an independent, registered charitable NGO that works in the field of animal welfare and environmental protection. The organization is actively involved in the conservation of sea turtles along the coastline of Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh. Green Mercy started the 'Save Sea Turtles' mission in the year 1996 in Srikakulam District and later extended it to Visakhapatnam District in 1999-2000. The organization has identified ten strategic sites for sea turtles along the coastline. The main strategies adopted by this organization are to create awareness about these endangered species and to mobilize people's participation to protect and carry out 'in-site' protection activity in the vulnerable pockets along the coastline. Green Mercy has prepared a Comprehensive Action

Plan to protect sea turtles along the coastline and has also constituted a monitoring group that will make efforts for the effective implementation of the Action Plan. The organization is taking assistance from the Department of Environmental Sciences, Andhra University and a WWF Nature Club in its mission to save sea turtles. The Forest Department has accorded special permission to Green Mercy for the protection of sea turtles in the districts of Northern Andhra Pradesh.

The conservation effort 'Mission to save sea turtles' has been launched with the co-operation of the A.P Forest Department as well as that of local conservation groups as well as the Coast Guard. Education and awareness programs have been initiated by Green Mercy in the coastal villages and aim at involving and mobilizing the

local people, especially the fishing communities. As a result of the dedicated efforts of this organization fishermen of the Srikulam coastal

belt of Srikulam District have given up their traditional hunting of sea turtles and are instead now involved in their protection.

Table 1: Green Mercy's mission to save sea turtles in Srikulam District covering 120km of coastline stretching between Srikulam to Baruva Beach during 1996-2000.

Place	Range (km)	Season	No. of Nests protected	No. of eggs	No. of eggs destroyed	Success rate (%)	Predators observed
Srikulam*	15	1996-97	22	1274	924	58	D,J,G,C,H T
	15	1997-98	28	1645	1144	59	
	15	1998-99	33	2009	1285	61	
	15	1999-00	30	1969	1061	65	
Mofasbandar**	10	1996-97	21	1295	901	59	H,D,J,G
	10	1997-98	28	1678	1120	60	
	10	1998-99	30	1827	1169	61	
	10	1999-00	25	1590	935	63	
Kalingapatnam* *	15	1996-97	33	1941	1350	59	D,J,C,G,H T,H
	15	1997-98	38	2275	1517	60	
	15	1998-99	42	2516	1678	60	
	10	1999-00	35	2291	1289	64	
Naupada**	20	1996-97	36	2192	1403	61	D,J,C,G,H T,H
	20	1997-98	42	2515	1678	60	
	20	1998-99	46	2848	1746	62	
	15	1999-00	38	2457	1383	64	
Baruva**	20	1996-97	39	2416	1482	62	D,J,C,G,H T,H
	20	1997-98	42	2556	1635	61	
	20	1998-99	49	3084	1812	63	
	20	1999-00	40	2588	1457	64	

Table 2: Green Mercy's mission to save sea turtles in Visakhapatanam District covering 112 km coastline stretching from Bhimili to Bangarayyapeta beach during 1999-2000

Place	Range (km)	No. of Nests protected	No. of eggs hatched	No. of eggs destroyed	Success rate (%)	Predators observed
Bangarayyapeta**	10	15	1158	473	71	D,J,G,C,HT,H
Pentakota**	10	18	1279	549	70	D,J,G,C,HT,H
Revupolavaram**	05	10	722	295	71	D,J,G,C,HTH
S.Rayavaram*	05	08	568	244	70	D,J,G,C,H
Rambilli*	05	10	715	307	70	D,J,G,C,H

* Vulnerable pocket

** Highly Vulnerable Pocket

D = Dogs, J = Jackals, G = Germs, C = Crabs, H = Humans, HT = High Tides