

## 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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### 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