## CONTENTS

**Editorial**

Kartik Shanker & Chloe Schäuble  
The Turtle Action Group - A Network of NGOs dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats in India  

**TAG Member Profiles**

Andaman & Nicobar Islands  
Andaman & Nicobar Environment Team (ANET)  

Andhra Pradesh  
Visakha Society for Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA)  

Gujarat  
Prakruti Nature Club (PNC)  

Karnataka  
Canara Green Academy (CGA)  

Field Services and Inter-Cultural Learning, India (FSL)  

Lakshadweep  
Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre (LMRCC)  

Maharashtra  
Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM)  

Orissa  
Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA)  

Alacrity  

Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club (PEORP)  

Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee (RSTPC)  

Tamil Nadu  
Students’ Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN)  

TREE Foundation  

---

**INDIAN OCEAN TURTLE NEWSLETTER**

ISSUE - 13  
JANUARY 2011  

ISSN 0973-1695
The Indian Ocean Turtle Newsletter was initiated to provide a forum for exchange of information on sea turtle biology and conservation, management and education and awareness activities in the Indian subcontinent, Indian Ocean region, and south/southeast Asia. The newsletter also intends to cover related aspects such as coastal zone management, fisheries and marine biology.

The newsletter is distributed free of cost to a network of government and non-government organisations and individuals in the region. All articles are also freely available in PDF and HTML formats on the website. Readers can submit names and addresses of individuals, NGOs, research institutions, schools and colleges, etc for inclusion in the mailing list.

SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

IOTN articles are peer reviewed by a member of the editorial board and a reviewer. In addition to invited and submitted articles, IOTN also publishes notes, letters and announcements. We also welcome casual notes, anecdotal accounts and snippets of information.

Manuscripts should be submitted by email to: kshanker@ces.iisc.ernet.in and kshanker@gmail.com

Manuscripts should be submitted in standard word processor formats or saved as rich text format (RTF). Figures should not be embedded in the text; they may be stored in EXCEL, JPG, TIF or BMP formats. High resolution figures may be requested after acceptance of the article. In the text, citations should appear as: (Vijaya, 1982), (Silas et al., 1985), (Kar & Bhaskar, 1982). References should be arranged chronologically, and multiple references may be separated by a semi colon. Please refer to IOTN issues or to the Guide to Authors on the website for formatting and style. Authors should provide complete contact information including an email address, phone and fax numbers.

Reference styles in list:


This newsletter is produced with support from:

IOTN ONLINE IS AVAILABLE AT www.iotn.org
Editorial

Worldwide, it is acknowledged that effective sea turtle conservation requires collaboration. Since sea turtles migrate across political boundaries and use habitats in many different countries, cooperation between different nations and peoples becomes critical in ensuring the long term survival of these species and the habitats they represent. Their interactions with humans occur in various habitats and in different social and ecological contexts, through which they encounter a range of stakeholders.

While the role of State agencies and large conservation or research organisations is known and often acclaimed, on site sea turtle conservation often involves small local organisations and conservationists. The numerous small and medium sized organisations that work along various stretches of the Indian coastline often work in isolation. Their efforts usually do not get the recognition they deserve, and the successes of their interventions and challenges they face are not shared with others that might benefit from this knowledge. The diversity of contexts and threats that sea turtles face necessitates a larger engagement within this conservation community and between these groups and other stakeholders such as the State.

In this special issue of the Indian Ocean Turtle Newsletter, we profile thirteen active members of the Turtle Action Group in India. Profiles of other TAG member organisations will be included in subsequent issues of the newsletter.

Kartik Shanker and Chloe Schauble
Editors

The Turtle Action Group
A network of NGOs dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats in India

Members of TAG:
Members of TAG include community based organisations, environmental groups and non-governmental organisations in India. Some of these organisations hold a wealth of knowledge and understanding of locally effective conservation methods and there is a need to facilitate the exchange and flow of such experiential knowledge systems.

A core committee of representatives carries out the task of coordinating activities and communicating with members and an advisory board constituted of various individuals from diverse backgrounds and fields of expertise provide advice and inputs.

Objectives of TAG:
The main objective of the network is to promote effective conservation of sea turtles and their habitats through collective and collaborative action. The network also seeks to establish appropriate channels of communication amongst member groups and engage with government agencies at the local and national level. In addition, in the near future, TAG will also network with international networks and organisations.

Activities of TAG:
Members of TAG meet annually to take the activities of the network forward, to review activities carried
out over the past year, and to introduce new members to the network. Above all, these annual workshops provide platforms for members from across the country to meet with one another and share experiences. They also serve as venues to discuss and create action plans for collaborative and collective action that can be undertaken by TAG members. TAG also uses these opportunities to invite experts in the field to conduct training programmes that are beneficial to members as individual organisations and as a collective. After the initiation workshop in January 2009 in Chennai, the second workshop was held in Bhubaneswar, Orissa in February 2010, and the third at Kumta, Karnataka in November 2010.

Activities carried out by TAG include the enhancing of research and monitoring capacities in collecting uniform and reliable data being developed through monitoring protocols, training programmes and workshop sessions. As the network expands, it seeks to promote collaboration not just between member organisations but with various stakeholders including local fishing communities, coastal community leaders and researchers of various disciplines. As a network, TAG draws its strength from the diverse range of expertise and experience that the members bring to it.

The activities of TAG are currently being supported through a grant from the Marine Turtle Conservation Act Fund of the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The current project is being executed through the Dakshin Foundation, Bangalore and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, Mamallapuram.

More information about TAG is available at www.seaturtlesofindia.org/tag.
Background of the organisation:

In the late 1980s, Romulus Whitaker, Satish Bhaskar and Alok Mallick set up a base in Wandoor, South Andaman for herpetofaunal and other ecological studies in the islands of the Andaman and Nicobar. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Environmental Team (ANET), a division of the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, was constituted in 1990. Five acres of land was bought in 1993 (with grants from Conservation International and the Royal Netherlands Embassy) at Wandoor on the southern tip of South Andaman, staff were hired and further grants enabled construction of a base for conservation, research, and education. ANET remains the main active environmental NGO and the only such research base in the islands.

Objectives:

ANET’s primary aim is to help preserve and maintain the long term survival of as much of the Andaman and Nicobar natural biodiversity as possible, whilst recognising the needs of the settled human inhabitants and the threatened aborigines that depend on the natural resources that the forest and sea provide. Since extensive conservation work had not been conducted in the islands prior to ANET’s formation in 1989, the team has found it necessary to tackle several different, though ultimately connected and complimentary fields. ANET aims to teach local people of the “workings” of these fragile island eco systems and help them understand the dangers of putting too much pressure on its resources. The team also endeavours to instill a greater level of environmental awareness by encouraging stakeholders to appreciate nature and develop an active interest in conserving the islands’ wildlife and habitats while still earning a livelihood in a sustainable manner. Further to this, ANET supports and trains local teachers, school children, settlers, members of the armed forces and administration, biologists, researchers, students, etc. to augment their network of individuals and organisations involved in conservation efforts.

Where we work:

ANET has had a wide presence in the islands, although currently, our activities are focused in specific beaches and habitats. Our collaborative sea turtle project work is carried out mainly in Little Andaman although surveys are now being done to re-open camps on key turtle nesting beaches in the Nicobars that were destroyed in the Tsunami. Our surveys also include beaches and other important habitats such as mangroves, the intertidal zone, canopy studies, etc. in various areas in South Andaman and Little Andaman. Extensive educational programmes have been carried out in schools of Havelock Island. A livelihood assessment has been carried out in Karen villages located in Middle Andaman Island.

Our past work with crocodiles and sea turtle surveys included all the islands in the Andaman group excepting Narcondam Island. This island was visited by a team from ANET in 2010 and is now being looked at as a potential heritage site. ANET, with other partners is also involved in studying mechanisms of sharing and cooperation through socio-ecological change in the Nicobar Islands, specifically Chowra, Kamorta (Central Nicobar), Little and Great Nicobar Islands. In the near future with other members of our team, ANET will also be involved in conducting training on basic socio-economic monitoring of reefs and resources for the Havelock and Neil regions which are highly influenced by the tourism economy but depend heavily on healthy reef ecosystems. Earlier,
ANET and others were involved in an educational programme with the schools of Havelock Island.

**Activities:**

Extensive studies on sea snakes, flora, marine turtles, herpetofaunal biogeography, bats, other small mammals, resource use, land use, rain water harvesting, coral reefs, invasive species, crocodile surveying and socio-economics have been undertaken. Other activities include assisting the Forest Department in ecologically suitable protected area management planning. ANET has an ongoing environment education programme and has collaborated with Centre for Environmental Education to produce a teacher-training manual in English and Hindi, (‘Treasured Islands’) for the schools in the islands.

*Leatherback sea turtle monitoring programme:*

The leatherback nesting population of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is the single largest in the Indian Ocean. The coastline and beaches of these islands were severely affected by the December 2004 earthquake and the subsequent tsunami. Many important nesting sites in the region were badly affected and no information exists on the effect of these disturbances on the leatherback nesting populations of the region especially from the islands of Nicobar which are prime nesting beaches for the leatherback turtles in the Indo-Pacific region. This is largely due to the remoteness of the sites and logistical constraints in conducting such a study. In collaboration with the Centre for Ecological Sciences (Indian Institute of Science), Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Dakshin Foundation and the Department of Environment and Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, we have been supporting and helping coordinate the monitoring of leatherback sea turtle nesting in some of the prime nesting beaches of Little Andaman Island in order to understand the post-tsunami recovery of nesting on these beaches. We have also been tagging the turtles and assist in collection of tissue samples for genetic analysis of these populations.

**Support for the organisation:**

The bulk of ANET’s funding is provided by The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust. Financial support
for the leatherback turtle monitoring programme has been coming from MTCA, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment and the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science.

**Plans for the future:**

We intend to continue the current leatherback nesting monitoring programmes and also undertake tagging, monitoring and surveys in the more remote, though prime nesting beaches of the Nicobar group of islands.

We also intend to undertake more focused long term scientific data collection that would help understand the impacts of climate change on the sex-ratio of leatherback turtles of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Our objective is to involve more local community people in turtle conservation activities. This will not just serve as an alternate livelihood option for many local communities who are otherwise dependent on natural resources, but also help in increasing conservation awareness among the local communities.

Current data on leatherback turtle nesting from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are patchy. In collaboration with Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science and the Forest Department, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, we plan to undertake satellite telemetry studies on the leatherback turtles of the region that would help us understand the migration patterns of the turtles and also help characterise ecology and behaviour.

This information will be valuable in formulating meaningful conservation strategies for this critically endangered species.

**Role within the network:**

While there are a considerable number of organisations working on conservation of sea turtles, most of them are based in the Indian mainland. We are unique in being the only organisation based out of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an important and prime nesting site for sea turtles of all four species that occur in India, namely Olive ridley, Green, Hawksbill and Leatherback. In addition, nesting sites of the leatherback turtles in the country are entirely restricted the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Our organisation has been based in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the past 20 years and we have been involved in sea turtle conservation in the region for more than 2 decades. Through our years of involvement in conservation related work in the region, we have built considerable rapport with the local communities (both indigenous and mainlanders) as well as the resource managers (Forest Department). We already have a strong platform of sea turtle conservation history in the islands from where more focused conservation and research actions can be launched. This is what we have to offer to the TAG.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are an isolated group of islands from the Indian mainland and so are the conservation groups and their activities. The Turtle Action Group would provide an excellent opportunity not only to highlight our work and activities to groups of similar interests in the country, but also help to share and learn from experiences and best conservation practices from other parts of India. This knowledge we feel is vital to the evolution and long-term goals of our organisation.

*Contributed by Soham Mukherjee, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust / Andaman & Nicobar Environmental Team.*

**Contact information:**

Tasneem Khan, Assistant Director, ANET.

*Postal address:* Andaman and Nicobar Islands Environmental Team, Centre for Island Ecology Post Bag-1, Junglighat P.O. Port Blair – 744 103, Andaman Islands

*Phone:* +91- 03192 280081, 99332 25656

*Email:* info@anetindia.org; tasneem@anetindia.org; anita@anetindia.org

*Blog:* www.anetindia.org
Visakha Society for Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA)
Andhra Pradesh

Background of the organisation:

Visakhapatnam is a fast growing city on the east coast of India along the Bay of Bengal in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In June 1996, a small group of animal lovers from the city started the Visakha Society for Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA). The aim of VSPCA was to make a profound and lasting impact on the lives of many suffering animals and to protect the environment against the destructive forces of unplanned development in the region. VSPCA is an associate member of the Royal Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and the World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA), and is recognised by the Animal Welfare Board of India, Chennai and the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Objectives:

The Society, being non-profit in nature and set up exclusively for the promotion of welfare of all animals which are an essential part of the environment and society, is dedicated to prevent cruelty and alleviate suffering of all animals.

Through its innovative awareness programmes, VSPCA intends to educate the masses and build a strong and lasting bond between animals and human societies, and to compel responsibility upon people towards the welfare of animals, especially the sick, injured and abandoned. We endeavour to provide a framework for the enforcement of law at all levels of government and pursue and promote a uniform codified law for animals.

Where we work:

VSPCA carries out its activities in various parts of Andhra Pradesh with a focus in Visakhapatnam. Our sea turtle conservation activities are carried out primarily in Visakhapatnam, Bheemili and Srikakulam.

Support for the organisation:

VSPCA has a multifaceted approach, and our protection programmes involve different kinds of species. Therefore, the categories under which we solicit funding and support for various projects ranges from donations from individuals and philanthropists and grants from organisations associated or interested in supporting programmes for particular species. We also receive partial support from government agencies.

Plans for the future:

Of the various projects that our organisation carries out, sea turtle protection is our earliest and most ambitious endeavor. Therefore our plans as far as sea turtle protection is concerned would like to expand in geographical scope from the Visakhapatnam beaches to the borders of Orissa in the north, where there are much more significant turtle nesting grounds, approximating to a total of 990 km. So far the activities we have successfully carried have been restricted to an area about 60 km wide. The paucity of funds for sea turtle protection has always been the greatest hindrance in our efforts, presumably due to the nature of nesting in the area, which is sporadic, as compared to mass nesting in the neighbouring state of Orissa. This, despite it being proven that success rates are higher in the significant nesting beaches along our coast. Our efforts in future therefore will focus on drawing attention to the importance of these nesting beaches in ensuring the survival of the species.

Role within the network:

VSPCA sees its role within the network to provide basic field related expertise, one of the necessary ingredients for effective conservation of sea turtles. Our strength lies in our dedication and commitment to the cause. As a core member of TAG, we are willing to lead from the forefront and hope to provide the requirements that will help meet the objectives of TAG. Our action based interventions
and experience with education and awareness encompassing all animals will help provide a more comprehensive approach to the cause. We love all animals and for us, to save and protect sea turtles is not based on the number of sea turtles coming to nest on our beaches. This is the motive which drives our commitment to support such conservation efforts for sea turtles even if it is just one sea turtle!

We hope that TAG will benefit from our role within it and utilise our expertise in a manner that would best support its activities and fulfill its objectives. The nature of the constitution of the network which involves organisations from all over the country will enable us to interact with others and help develop a working model for collaborative efforts, to seek and provide any help that is required to continue the efforts towards protecting sea turtles.

Contributed by Pradeep Kumar Nath, President and Founder, VSPCA.

Contact information:

Pradeep Kumar Nath, President and Founder, VSPCA.

Postal address:
26.15.200 Main Road, Visakhapatnam - 530001,
Andhra Pradesh
Phone: +91 891 2716124
Email: vspcadeep@yahoo.co.in
Website: www.vspca.org
Background of the organisation:

The Prakruti Nature Club was started in 1997, and was initiated for the conservation and protection of wildlife and marine life. At present, the organisation has over 180 members and volunteers. The members of the organisation come from a diverse range of backgrounds and include members of the local fishing community, coastal area farmers and members of forest villages.

Where we work:

Prakruti Nature Club focuses its activities along the Saurashtra and Gujarat coast. We work towards protection of sea turtles, their nests and habitats, whale sharks and other sea creatures, in collaboration with the Gujarat Forest Department. Apart from coast and marine related issues, our organisation also works towards conservation of wildlife and migratory birds with the active involvement of local communities.

Activities:

In the year 2009 – 2010, we have been successful in the following activities:

i. Rescue of 195 whale sharks

ii. Rescue of 10 leopards

iii. Migratory bird census (during winter)

iv. Release of 23,992 turtle hatchlings

v. Rescue of 45 venomous and 11 non-venomous snakes

vi. Rescue and rehabilitation of other animals including crocodiles, spotted deer, migratory birds and peacocks

Support for the organisation:

Volunteers at the organisation contribute in terms of time and effort and funding for activities is largely supported through individual contributions by members of the organisation. We are grateful to have Ambuja Cements and Sapoorji Pallonji Pvt. Ltd. Co., Kodinar, support and endorse our efforts through funds provided for specific activities.

Plans for the future:

In addition to our existing activities, we are in the process of starting an awareness programme towards minimum usage of plastic along coastal areas, among local community members and school children. Our efforts will also be aimed at reducing consumption of turtle eggs, a practice that is prevalent amongst some of the communities that live on the coast.
Role within the network:

As a partner organisation within the network, we hope to contribute through the collection of data for turtles visiting the west coast in Saurashtra and the rest of Gujarat. Particularly, our strong association with the local forest department will be beneficial to the network as a whole in terms of collection and distribution of information and data, furthering the growth of the network. Our contribution also extends to providing information on the activities that we carry out that may be beneficial to other members and in turn hope to learn important lessons from other parts of the country. We would like to spread our wings, and solicit the support and the attention of the international community as well.

Contributed by Dinesh Goswami and Jignesh Gohil, Prakruti Nature Club.

Contact information:


Postal address:
Marutinagar Society, Opp. Kanya Chhatralay Veraval Road, Kodinar-362725, Gujarat.
Phone: +91 2795 222228; 9898515362(Dinesh); 9978311011(Jignesh)
Email: dinesh_goswami2008@yahoo.com; jignesh_gohil@rediffmail.com
Website: www.prakrutinatureclub.org

Canara Green Academy
Karnataka

Background of the organisation:

Canara Green Academy was established and registered under Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960 on 17th October 2005. It has its head office in Sirsi. The organisation was established with a motto of conserving flora and fauna of North Kanara District. Our activities are carried out exclusively within the North Kanara District.

Activities:

Conservation of sea turtles, mangroves and medicinal plants is the main mission of Canara Green Academy. In last four years, the activities that have been carried out by the Academy include:

Conservation of sea turtles:

In 1984, the Karnataka Forest Department had established about 40 sea turtle breeding centres all over the Karnataka coastline. However, in North Kanara, the only surviving breeding centre that was thus established is at Jali. In 2006, the Academy collected secondary information on sea turtles visiting the coast, and potential sea turtle nesting beaches were identified and temporary breeding centers were established at Kadle (see photo, right), Manki, Haldipur (see photo, left), Dhareshwar, Kagal and Gangavali. Ex-situ and in-situ conservation is carried out, depending on the security of the nests identified. This is done with the help of local villagers.

For the creation of awareness among the locals, door to door campaigns and meetings at the micro level (i.e., of the village) are conducted. State level workshops are also conducted by the Academy. As an incentive to promote conservation and the participation of local people in our activities, an honorarium is awarded to any person who identifies and informs our volunteers of nests along the beach.
Development of methodology for sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants and NTFPs:

The Western Ghats are a treasure trove of medicinal plants and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). There is active trade of medicinal plants and NTFPs, and the methods of extraction of such products are often destructive. For the conservation and development of medicinal and NTFPs local people need to be motivated and methods for sustainable harvesting have to be introduced.

For the development of methodology in sustainable harvesting, Canara Green Academy has worked as a partner NGO with the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT). This project is implemented in Shirgunji village of Honavar Division.

Bird Census:

The Academy regularly carries out bird census in mangrove areas and along the coast. Students from local colleges in the area assist with the census. Workshops conducted at local colleges, like the recent workshop at Kumta, provide students with knowledge about identification of birds and census techniques.

Support for the organisation:

The Canara Green Academy raises funds to support its programmes from various donor organisations and voluntary contributions from private organisations and citizens. It also sustains its activities by working as a partner with other organisations (such as the FRLHT) or as an evaluating agency in the implementation of certain government schemes such as the National Afforestation Programme.

Plans for the future:

CGA aims to expand its activities to include:

1. Extending our conservation activities to include freshwater turtles.
2. Introduction of sustainable harvesting methods to Village Forest Committees of Honavar Forest Division in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department.
3. Conservation of mangroves and sea turtles in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department.
4. Continue bird census in North Karnataka.

Role within the network:

CGA recognises that in order to bring individuals, NGOs and institutions with similar interests together on same platform, a network is necessary.
TAG provides us an opportunity to interact with other organisations from around the country and will help develop our own skills and learn from their experiences in the field, and in return we have the opportunity to share our experiences with others.

Contributed by Ravi Pandit, Canara Green Academy.

Contact information:
Ravi Pandit, Canara Green Academy.

Postal address:
No. 163, Shrikrishna, Shree Vananagara Chipgi,
Sirsi – 581402, Karnataka
Phone: +91 9945734535
Email: mail@canaragreenacademy.org

Field Services and Inter-Cultural Learning (FSL India)
Karnataka

Background of the organisation:

FSL India is a non-profit, charitable, social and independent non governmental organisation with the main objective of promoting global understanding, inter-cultural learning and to work for togetherness encouraged by world peace through youth mobility.

FSL India is registered under the Indian Trust Act and is not inclined to any political or religious groups and it is structured with a constituency-based network. It acts as a support structure for other youth organisations by organising work camps, meetings, workshops and coordinating long term voluntary service. It co-operates with a large number of NGOs all across India in coordinating the international exchange of volunteers and in supporting the volunteer movement in India.

FSL India undertakes projects across India and its head office is located in Bangalore, South India. FSL India is open to receiving committed members irrespective of any social background.

Through volunteering, FSL India aims to offer direct contact to Indian youth, women, farmers, fishermen and other vulnerable sections of society to interact with international youth worldwide to understand local needs. FSL India places international volunteers in local community projects to support sustainable development and to bring an inter-cultural dimension to community projects. International volunteers can make a positive impact towards local communities, by encouraging them to continue work initiated by FSL India and its volunteers.

Where we work:

Amongst the various programmes that are run by the FSL office in Kundapur, Karnataka, sea turtle and coastal habitat conservation activities are carried out along the coastline of the North Udupi district.

January 2011
Objectives:

The objectives of FSL are to:

- Promote international understanding and cultural exchange,
- Encourage voluntary service as a means to encourage peace, equality and democracy,
- Support community development and bring an inter-cultural dimension to community projects,
- To help and conserve our nature,
- To bring global issues to the local community, and
- Self-awareness and personal development for the volunteers.

Activities:

Over the past year, FSL has carried out a Sea Turtle Conservation and Environment Education and Awareness programme. The duration of the programme was six months. The objective of the programme was to create awareness among the fishermen community about importance of the sea turtle population. We were able to create awareness to among fishermen community along 60 km of North Udupi district of Karnataka State. We work in 17 villages. For every 5 km of target area we have managed to appoint fishermen leaders who work as our contact persons helping in this conservation programme.

Support for the organisation:

FSL India is a non–profit organisation and does not have external funding. All costs of FSL India are sustained through participation fees from volunteers. We work only with local organisations that need our support.

Plans for the future:

We would like to close the gap between Udupi to Kerala (90 km) by extending our working area. We would also like to work towards saving other endangered species, along with our sea turtle conservation programme.

Role within the network:

FSL India places international volunteers in local community projects to support sustainable development and to bring an inter-cultural dimension to community projects. We can contribute to TAG members by placing international volunteers in their projects by which they can get additional human resources. We are located in a place where only minimal sea turtle nesting takes place and we are a small organisation compared to others. We are therefore ready to contribute as per the needs of the network. As a member of TAG, we gain a lot of technical knowledge and we learn a lot of good practices from other members.

Contributed by Dayanand Salins, Coordinator – Sea Turtle Project, FSL India.

Contact information:

Dayanand Salins, Coordinator, Sea Turtle Project.

Postal address:
FSL India, East End residency, East block road, Kundapur, Udupi district - 576201, Karnataka
Phone: +91 8254 231811
Email: daya@fsl-india.org
Website: www.fsl-india.org/kundapur_center.html
Background of the organisation:

The Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre (LMRCC) was formed on 16 January 2008, the International Year of Coral Reefs. The organisation was established by a group of young islanders, and it is the first organisation in Lakshadweep that has a primary focus on community-based marine conservation. The vision of LMRCC is to achieve “A sustainably progressing Lakshadweep where marine ecosystems are healthy and well managed”.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the LMRCC are:

- To develop as a centre of excellence in marine research and conservation.
- To conserve the flora and fauna of Lakshadweep through community participation.

Where we work:

LMRCC is registered as a society and its office is situated in Kavaratti, the capital of the U.T. of Lakshadweep. Currently, we work in Kavaratti, Agatti and Pitti Bird Sanctuary. We organise sea turtle and bird surveys in the uninhabited islands of Bangaram, Thinnaka, Parali and Suheli.

Activities:

Pitti Bird Sanctuary Conservation:

Pitti Bird Sanctuary is the only oceanic tern nesting sanctuary in India and the only protected area in Lakshadweep under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972). The main economic activity of pole and line tuna fishing in the islands is directly dependent on the existence of terns. We work closely with the fishing community to reduce the threats to these birds on the island.

Marine Turtle Conservation:

Lakshadweep has a significant population of the endangered green and hawksbill turtles. Increasing tourism and fishing activities in the islands have started to have negative impacts on the turtles and their habitats. We work with the local community, school students, fishermen and the Forest Department to reduce the threats to these ocean ambassadors through education and awareness programmes.

Environmental Education:

Lakshadweep follows the school curriculum of the neighbouring state of Kerala, and this denies the island students a chance to learn about their immediate environment, the coral reefs. We have
developed educational resources on coral reefs and their conservation under our SEACOLOGY funded programme, which students are encouraged to use along with their existing curriculum. An Environmental Education programme for conserving the Pitti bird sanctuary is operational in two islands with financial assistance from ATREE’s Small Grants Programme. This education programme has been well received by the schools and the local community.

Fishermen Empowerment Programme:

We work closely with fisherman associations in islands by providing technical and scientific advice on matters of coastal development and livelihoods issues. We also help them to voice their concerns at national platforms by linking them with national organisations in the country.

Lakshadweep Dive Club:

This initiative is organised to provide a common platform to scuba divers from Lakshadweep and also involve them in marine conservation. Divers can collect valuable data which will help in reef conservation; they can also teach tourists the value of coral reefs and make them supporters of conservation.

Networking:

LMRCC partners with many local, national and international organisations for marine conservation. We work with TAG-India, Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN), the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Dakshin Foundation, TREE Foundation, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Reef Watch Marine Conservation, CARESS, SEACOLOGY, PADI Project, AWARE Foundation, WWF India, IUCN and the Department of Fisheries, Environment and Forests of the Lakshadweep Administration.

Support for the organisation:

Most of the activities of the organisation are supported by voluntary contributions from members and interested groups. We have received financial assistance from, ATREE, SEACOLOGY and the Department of Environment and Forests, U.T of Lakshadweep.

Role within the network:

As a member of TAG, we see our role to include:

• Acting as the Lakshadweep focal point of TAG, and to organise collaborative research, conservation and advocacy programmes for sea turtle conservation in the islands.
• Strengthening the network by training local groups from the Lakshadweep Islands to carry out sea turtle conservation activities in their respective islands.
• Coordinating a local network in Lakshadweep to strengthen the objectives of the national network.

Benefits from TAG:

The diversity of organisational partners in TAG will provide an excellent platform for learning from each other’s experience.

The lack of media attention to Lakshadweep often sidelines conservation issues in the islands; the network will therefore provide an excellent platform to make the voice of the islands heard by national and international audiences.

Contributed by Jafer Hisham, Chief Executive Officer, LMRCC.

Contact information:

Jafer Hisham, Chief Executive Officer, LMRCC.

Postal address:
Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre (LMRCC), Conservation Education Centre, Pittiyathala, Kavaratti Island - 682555
U.T of Lakshadweep
Phone: + 91 9447048400; 9746544553
Email: jaferhisham@gmail.com
Website: www.lmrcc.in
Background of the organisation:

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM) was established in the year 1992 by a small group of people from Chiplun, Maharashtra interested in undertaking conservation work. Mr. Bhau Katdare took the lead and announced a meeting to discuss nature conservation work and in the same meeting, the constitution and mandate of SNM was decided. Immediately afterwards, SNM was registered as a non-governmental organisation, and began its activities.

In the beginning we were engaged mostly in awareness programmes, which included nature trails, exhibitions, and contests in schools and colleges. Slowly we moved towards study and research of endangered species – and the Konkan region has a rich biodiversity. In little time we understood that this work is not sufficient; many individuals and organisations carry out research, but very little is actually done towards conservation. Hence, we decided to focus our activities on conservation oriented interventions.

Our Mission is “Nature conservation through field protection, awareness, education and scientific base action.”

Where we work:

SNM works throughout India but a major portion of our activities is focused along the Maharashtra coastline.

Activities:

We work towards conservation, research and awareness of the region’s biodiversity. Some of our important projects include:

- Conservation of marine turtles
- Conservation of white-rumped vultures
- Conservation of Indian swiftlet
- Conservation of white-bellied sea-eagle
- Project Mangrove
- Study of birds

Support for the organisation:

Our organisation is supported by donations and contributions from citizens, private companies, trusts, and other non-governmental organisations.
in the country, some of whom work actively in the same area. As a policy, we regularly communicate with our donors and supporters, and ensure that we regularly send them annual reports, financial reports and information regarding our activities.

**Role within the network:**

With help from other members of the network, we will strengthen our efforts in conservation, research and awareness of marine turtles, and hope in return to contribute in our capacity to the best possible extent in each of the network’s activities. As the network is constituted of groups from all over the country with support from international organisations, we will certainly be benefited as an individual organisation and as a network.

**Contact information:**

Bhau Katdare, Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra.

**Postal address:**
Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra
Near Laxminarayan Temple,
At & Post taluka: Chiplun,
Dist. Ratnagiri - 415605, Maharashtra

**Phone:** +91 2355 - 253030; +91 9423831700; 9373610817

**Email:** snmcpn@rediffmail.com; sahyadricpn@gmail.com

**Website:** www.snmcpn.org

---

**Contributed by Bhau Katdare, Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra.**

---

**Action for Protection of Wild Animals**

**Orissa**

**Background of the organisation:**

Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA) was established on 20th April 1999 and registered under the Society Registration Act XXI of 1860. It is a non-profit organisation dedicated to animal welfare and nature conservation programmes in coastal Orissa. It is accredited by the Animal Welfare Board of India, Ministry of Environment & Forest, Govt. of India.

APOWA believes in finding solutions to animal welfare and conservation challenges that provide lasting benefits for animals and community. The organisation was founded with a mission of:

“building a community of people to support…[the] welfare of animals and [the] environment and [to] improve relationships between man, animal and environment.”

We focus on species that are endangered today.

Their ecosystems or habitat as a whole are a crucial component of our conservation strategy.

APOWA has had 10 years of experience in sea turtle conservation in Orissa. We protect sea turtles through research, education and action. We have the skills, knowledge and experience to be Orissa’s sea turtle champion. They are flagship species; protecting important flagship species and preserving their habitat helps to protect a number of other species that depend on the same habitat.

**Objectives:**

- To conserve nature, especially endangered species and threatened habitats, in partnership with communities.
- To work with partners with emphasis on protection and management of biologically significant places so that wildlife populations can recover.
To encourage communities to practice environmental stewardship and wise use of natural resources, through conservation education and technical assistance, for the beneficial coexistence of humans and wildlife.

To carry out legislative and educational campaigns. This is an effort to try to prevent cruelty to animals, preserve endangered species, and protect wildlife habitats.

To provide emergency assistance to protect endangered wildlife species, with particular priority to marine turtles and dolphins.

To support and conduct research programmes, field action projects, and other activities that encourage proactive action for conservation of wildlife and wild habitats.

To produce and disseminate public awareness and educational material and communication strategies that will promote the main objectives of the organisation.

To promote environment and conservation education programmes in schools and villages.

To help alleviate animal suffering and raise public consciousness towards giving animals the respect they need and deserve.

To improve the knowledge and skills of community volunteers and animal owners for the long-term welfare of animals.

To provide rescue, relief and rehabilitation programmes for animals and people during natural disasters.

To initiate disaster management programmes.

To conserve and protect the coastal resources, especially mangrove resources, of the region.

Where we work:

The operational area situated south of the Gahirmatha sea turtle rookery in Orissa known for the world’s largest olive ridley turtle mass nesting and breeding ground. Although mass nesting takes place at Gahirmatha, the buffer zone contributes greatly through sporadic nesting of olive ridley turtles. Our project fieldwork is carried out in the buffer zone of Gahirmatha viz., Pentha, Sandhakud, Paradeep urban beach, Siali and Petaphata.
Support for the organisation:

APOWA seeks support from organisations and individuals who wish to join hands with us and our community-based sea turtle/habitat conservation programmes. We provide desperately needed conservation programmes, nest and habitat protection as well as vital fishermen education at the world’s largest olive ridley mass nesting site in the region. This project is a great way of involving communities in the process of finding a sustainable way forward. Sea turtles are highly migratory during all stages if their lifecycle, so conservation action taken in any one place can have profound and positive implications for their survival throughout Orissa – and beyond.

Role within the network:

APOWA has been continuing to save, protect and help conserve the endangered sea turtles and their habitat along the Orissa coast, which falls under one of the major objectives of TAG. TAG encourages sea turtle activities throughout the country, and as a member of the TAG, APOWA seeks cooperation, guidance, and technical help to continue its sea turtle conservation programmes in its geographical area of work in Orissa.

Contributed by Bijaya Kabi, Honorary Director, APOWA.

Contact information:

Bijaya Kumar Kabi, Honorary Director, APOWA.

Postal address:
Action for Protection of Wild Animals
Hatapatana, P.O. Kadaliban, Kendrapara District, Orissa – 754222
Phone: +91 6729 221908; +91 9437439946
Email: bijayakabi@apowa.org
Website: www.apowa.org

Alacrity
Orissa

Background of the organisation:

Alacrity was founded in April 1995 with a vision to promote conservation and awareness of the marine ecosystem in Kendrapara, Orissa, through the participation of local community and self-help women’s groups.

Objectives:

The main objectives of Alacrity are:

- To serve down-trodden sections of society through community development and capacity building,
- To work towards conservation of the environment, including protection of the coastal stretches of the region that are nesting sites of the olive ridley turtle, and to facilitate women’s empowerment and promote social justice.

Activities:

The focus of our activities is to involve local community members in conservation initiatives and to provide alternate sources of livelihood for people dependent on coastal and marine resources in and around protected areas. Our sea turtle conservation activities involve imparting awareness to fishing community members residing within the periphery of the Gahirmatha area. We have also established ‘eco-development’ groups within the region for conservation and protection of sea turtles and their nesting habitats, and for the conservation of natural resources including mangrove forests. Currently, 30 such eco-development groups have
been functioning within the fishing communities of the region.

There are two major groups of people who live within and around the Gahirmatha sanctuary area. They include the Odiya speaking community and refugees from West Bengal and Bangladesh. These communities primarily depend on the mangrove forests within and surrounding the sanctuary area for their livelihoods. In the recent past, however, a large portion of the mangrove forest area was cleared for paddy cultivation in Jamboo and the Mahanadi delta area. This adversely impacted the fishing communities inhabiting the adjoining delta area who were harvesting fish from the river and from creeks. Expansion of agriculture by encroachment on forest lands also hampered their access to firewood and fodder from the mangrove forest area. With Alacrity’s intervention in the area falling under the Batighar gram panchayat, members of this community have expressed their desire to work with us in order to enhance their skills and explore alternate livelihood opportunities. Apart from illegal encroachment onto forest land, and the expansion of agricultural land, restrictions imposed by the Coastal Regulation Zone Management Notification (CRZ) have presented further hindrances to their access to resources in the area.

In addition to these activities, with the financial support of D.F.O. Rajnagar, Alacrity has imparted skill upgradation training programmes on tailoring and honeybee keeping. Our tailoring programme has benefited around 80 fisherwomen belonging to eco-development committees. Alacrity provides training and equipment and regularly monitors the programme. The local forest department office has also been supportive of the initiative. Members benefiting from this scheme now earn between INR 1,200 and INR 1,800 a month.

The honeybee keeping programme implemented by Alacrity benefits around 60 fishermen and women, including the youth in the community. Alacrity invites experts in the field to provide the necessary training and guidance, and provides beekeeping boxes. The sale of honey has proved to be a sustainable and viable alternate source of livelihood to the community.

Alacrity’s net mending programme, an initiative that is completely supported through financial contributions to the organisation, involves the youth in the fishing community. Currently, 25 young men and women have undergone training and are pursuing this option of securing a livelihood.

Support for the organisation:

Alacrity receives financial support from the District Forest Office of Kendrapara to support its alternative livelihoods programme. Voluntary contributions from members and individuals, and local/state
government donations are also sought to sustain other activities and programmes of the organisation.

Role within the network:

Alacrity is happy to be a member of TAG. With our aim to conserve the olive ridley turtles in the area, in addition to horseshoe crabs, dolphins and the habitats they utilise, we hope to benefit from the experience of others who are part of this national network.

We are willing to contribute to the network’s growth by providing information on sea turtles in the area, and keeping members informed of our activities.

Contributed by Kalpana Mallik, Chief Functionary, Alacrity.

Contact information:

Kalpana Mallik, Alacrity.

Postal address:
ALACRITY, At/PO: Kapaleswar, District: Kendrapada, Orissa
Phone: +91 6727 220792; 221792
Email: alacrity34@yahoo.co.in; kalpanamallik@gmail.com

Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club
Orissa

Background of the organisation:

The Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club was founded in 2008. 12 people from the village of Podampeta came together to form the organisation with the mission to conserve olive ridley turtles that visit the beaches of Podampeta and Rushikulya. Most of the members of the organisation were previously working independently or with other NGOs and the Forest Department. These members decided to involve the local community in their conservation efforts and approached the self-help groups in the village. Currently, the membership of the organisation includes the founding members along with 10 representatives of women’s self-help groups in the area.

Where we work:

The organisation carries out its awareness activities in Podampeta and surrounding villages of Rushikulya in Orissa. Sea turtle conservation activities are carried out along the Rushikulya coastline.

Support for the organisation:

Currently, all financial support for the organisation comes through voluntary contributions from members. We hope to soon have the support of the Forest Department and government and other funding agencies to expand our activities.

Activities:

The problems that face the particular stretch of coastline that Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club addresses are not unique to the area but are common across many stretches along Orissa and the rest of the country. Threats to nesting turtles and eggs/hatchlings include poaching by people and predation by stray dogs and crabs. To address these particular problems, we carry out awareness programmes that inform people in nearby villages regarding the importance of turtles to the coastal ecosystem and the illegality of such activities. Ignorance of the importance of conservation is the primary cause for destruction of turtle nests and habitats at the local scale. Volunteers also patrol the beach at nights during the nesting
and hatching season to protect the turtles and nests from dogs and other predators. During the hatching season, hatchling counts are regularly conducted.

The awareness activities of the organisation are geared towards informing people about the need for protecting beaches and using appropriate fishing nets, and cooperation from the local community is sought in order to make conservation programmes successful. We regularly conduct beach clean-up programmes in which we involve children from local schools.

The threat of beach erosion and its impact on nesting beaches has been profound in the area. A village that was part of Podampeta lost most of its land due to rising sea levels and almost 50 families had to be relocated. While government support for such relocation has been present, the root causes of beach erosion have not been addressed.

**Plans for the future:**

We would like to be able to take our awareness programmes to other villages beyond Podampeta. In order to effectively protect nesting turtles and the eggs/hatchlings, we would like to involve more people, especially women, through sensitisation and creating awareness. However, in order to expand and enhance our activities, we would require additional funds as voluntary service from the local community is hard to come by.

**Role within the network:**

Being a member of TAG provides an opportunity for groups working across the country to be able to identify common problems and try to come up with solutions collectively in opposed to doing so in isolation. We hope to be able to join others in collaborative programmes for sea turtle protection, and find solutions to larger scale problems that have impacts on the local scale, and most of which smaller organisations such as ours attempt to tackle.

We would like to share our experiences with others and hope to benefit from their advice and the lessons they have learned on the field in carrying out their own activities. This strength in numbers will surely go a long way in influencing conservation action throughout the country.

**Contributed by D. Jogendra, Volunteer, Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club.**

**Contact information:**

B. Himanshu, Secretary, Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club.

*Postal address:*
Podampeta P.O., Via Humma
Ganjam District – 761027, Orissa
*Phone:* +91 9938436368 (Jogendra)
Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee
Orissa

Background of the organisation:

The Rushikulya river mouth in Orissa is an important nesting site for olive ridley turtles. Every year from November to the end of January, mating takes place in the coastal waters. Hundreds of thousands of female turtles then visit the beach *en masse* to lay their eggs from February to early April. Wildlife biologist, Bivash Pandav who carried out extensive studies in the area in the early 90’s noticed the lack of awareness about the olive ridley turtles among the villagers. This prompted him to set up the Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee (RSTPC) with the assistance of the local youth in 1998. RSTPC was officially registered in 2003. Right from its inception, volunteers and others became wholeheartedly involved in spreading awareness among the village folk about the ridleys, thus ensuring the involvement of the community in conservation efforts.

Objectives:

RSTPC’s primary aim is to help conserve olive ridley turtles and safeguard their nesting beaches along the Rushikulya coast. Members of the organisation are actively involved in collecting data and monitoring breeding and nesting turtles and recording mortality, nest predation and other factors that affect the olive ridley population. Since its inception, RSTPC has also been involved in encouraging youth from the local communities to be involved with conservation activities in the area.

Where we work:

RSTPC’s activities are primarily focused along the Ruhikulya river mouth along the coast of Orissa. The team members also carry out surveys and conservation activities along this coast in collaboration with other organisations in Orissa and networks such as the Orissa Marine Resources Conservation Consortium.

Activities:

The members of RSTPC have begun to monitor the nesting population and also assist in the release of hatchlings during mass hatching along the Rushikulya coast. We have also encouraged tourists, locals and especially children to participate in the collection and release of disoriented hatchlings as a part of our awareness programmes. Members also assist in collecting data and collaborate with researchers to provide logistic support and field staff. Towards this end, they are trained in the latest data collection and monitoring/survey methods.
Olive ridley sea turtle monitoring:

The current projects of RSTPC include data collection from the tagging of turtles, recapture studies, distribution of the mating congregation, satellite transmitter ranging studies and monitoring hatchling mortality rates.

Rescue and reorientation of hatchlings on beaches affected by artificial lighting:

At Rushikulya beach, hatchlings often get disoriented due to artificial lighting. RSTPC members have therefore involved themselves in collecting the hatchlings in buckets and then releasing them in the ocean. Recently, a net has been placed along the beach to enable easy collection of hatchlings.

Public awareness:

By putting up stalls and creating sculptures of turtles, RSTPC has made its presence felt at Gopalpur Beach festival in recent years. The V.J. Sheth Memorial Sea Turtle Interpretation Centre has been set up by RSTPC (courtesy the Eastern Shipping Corporation, Mumbai), which aims to increase public awareness about sea turtles and conservation programmes. For the locals, the turtle is sacrosanct as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Education and awareness materials are also provided by RSTPC to local school children and organisations in the form of CDs, journals, documentaries and pictures.

Support for the organisation:

Current activities of RSTPC are undertaken in collaboration with other organisations and agencies which include the Forest Department, Orissa, Dakshin Foundation, Bangalore, Wildlife Institute of India, Greenpeace, World Turtle Trust, Wildlife Society of Orissa, People for Animals and the Wildlife Trust of India. Members of RSTPC who have been trained by wildlife experts serve as research assistants, working in collaboration with scientists such as Dr. Bivash Pandav, Dr. Basudev Tripathi, Dr. Kartik Shanker, Dr. C.S. Kar and researchers such as Suresh Kumar and Divya Karnad.

Plans for the future:

RSTPC intends to continue and expand the current monitoring programmes. It also aims to increase capacity of staff in education, awareness and outreach programmes. RSTPC aims to strengthen its infrastructural and institutional capacity in order to independently carry out studies in addition to providing assistance to research organisations and individuals. The greater involvement of local community members, including members of fishing communities in turtle conservation activities will increase sensitivity to conservation issues and the importance of conserving resources in order to safeguard livelihoods.

Role within the network:

RSTPC is part of local networks of organisations in Orissa, including the Orissa Marine Resources Conservation Consortium (OMRCC) which facilitates sustained interactions amongst member organisations in the state. RSTPC is representative of a globally important olive ridley nesting site at the Rushikulya river mouth and come with a wealth of experience to contribute to the national level network through the sharing of local lessons in conservation.

The Turtle Action Group is an ideal platform for RSTPC to interact with members of organisations involved in sea turtle conservation activities along other parts of the Indian coastline, and would provide an opportunity to showcase its activities to groups of similar interests in the country.

Contributed by Rabindranath Sahu, Secretary, RSTPC.

Contact information:

Rabindranath Sahu, Secretary, RSTPC.

Postal address:
Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee
Purunamandha, Palibandha Post, Ganjam district,
Orissa – 761026
Phone: +91 9437204384; +91 9861203479
Email: turtle_rushikulya@yahoo.co.in
Background of the organisation:

The Students’ Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN) was formed, and established its first hatchery, in December 1988. Tito Chandy and Arif Razack were the original founders, and were joined shortly thereafter by Tharani Selvam, Kartik Shanker, Yohan Thiruchelvam, and Tara Thiagarajan. Satish Bhaskar, one of India’s pioneering sea turtle biologists was based in Madras from 1988 to 1991 and mentored the students and worked for the SSTCN during the 1989-90 season. Others, such as Romulus Whitaker and Harry Andrews of the Madras Crocodile Bank also provided support.

Sea turtle conservation began in 1971, when a few dedicated wildlife enthusiasts began walking the beaches of Chennai to document the status of and threats to sea turtles. Amongst these were S. Valliapan and Romulus Whitaker, the founder of both the Madras Snake Park and the Madras Crocodile Bank. From 1982 to 1988, the Forest Department set up several hatcheries along the Tamil Nadu coast, three near Madras (now Chennai) and two near Nagapattinam. The closing of hatcheries and conservation programme by the Forest Department in 1988 resulted in SSTCN being born.

The SSTCN has mainly been organised and operated by students from colleges and even schools and a few young working adults. Once students finish courses, they routinely leave Chennai after participating in or leading the organisation for two to three years, so the SSTCN has seen a high turnover of both membership and leadership.

One of the main motives in taking up this activity by SSTCN was to save nests from poaching. The objectives were always two fold: conservation and awareness creation. The idea was to use the context of the plight of the turtles to highlight the state of the environment.

Where we work:

We cover a total of about 7 km along the stretch of beach from Neelankarai in the south up to the Adyar estuary along the Chennai coast. Since 2009, we have also been covering the entire stretch of Marina beach (approximately 15 km), from the Adyar estuary up to Napier’s bridge.

Activities:

Our activities include beach monitoring, relocating nests found on our stretch of beach, hatchery management, and education and awareness campaigns; the programme has continued from 1988
until the present. Each season, the group establishes a hatchery, and every night from end-December through mid-April, the same 7.5 km stretch of beach is patrolled. From this year the additional stretch of 6.5 km covering the Marina beach up to the Cooum, has also been taken up for patrolling and nest relocation, and a new hatchery has been set up for this purpose.

Support for the organisation:

SSTCN has always been working only with student volunteers. As a result expenses have been very low. The hatchery is made with low cost bamboo slats and is reused for up to five years. Only in the last few years we have been paying a person from the fishing community to supervise the hatchery. This year we have employed a couple of people to monitor the stretch from the Adyar estuary up to the Cooum. As costs are minimal, we are able to easily raise funds from a few friends and well wishers.

Plans for the future:

We plan to build on the existing outreach activities to create more awareness and work towards positive solutions. Also, we liaise with other similar minded conservation groups to synergise energies, share volunteers, and create positive contexts for interested people to participate, and we plan to expand these to greater levels.

Role within the network:

We participate in combined research work, learn from each other’s experiences, draw energy from groups working with similar objectives, share data, participate, and work towards creating a strong voice to talk on behalf of turtles effectively.

Contributed by Akila Balu, SSTCN.

Contact information:

Akila Balu, SSTCN.

Postal address:
Students’ Sea Turtle Conservation Network
8/25, 2nd Street, DP Nagar, Kotturpuram
Chennai - 600085, Tamil Nadu
Phone: +91 9940300200 (Akila); +91 9789864166 (Arun)
Email: sstcnchennai@gmail.com
Website: http://sstcn.org
In conjunction with our community education programmes, TREE Foundation has developed and implemented awareness and training programmes for officials of the Environment and Forest and Fisheries Departments, Indian Coast Guard and Marine Police. Designed to standardise data collection and conservation protocols for sea turtle and marine mammals, these programmes will eventually be implemented in all coastal areas of India to build a nationwide network of officials sharing common goals of conservation.

Objectives:

TREE Foundation focuses on developing an eco-aware society ensuring harmonious co-existence with all life forms. The Foundation also aims to establish partnerships with local education institutions and decision-makers to disseminate findings and encourage more effective conservation policy through participatory workshops, curriculum development, and knowledge exchanges with conservationists.

Our primary mission is to protect the fragile marine eco-system of India and educate people to conserve all life forms. We strongly believe in the land-ocean connection, in that if people are the problem, then they are the solution. Successful conservation requires a multi-disciplinary approach, where communities and livelihoods are not excluded but instead empowered, thereby facilitating the base for effective change.

Where we work:

TREE Foundation is based in Chennai. Our activities are carried out along the coast of Chennai and Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh.

Activities:

In view of our objectives, TREE Foundation aims to address marine conservation by focusing on the following:

Sea turtle conservation: Using the olive ridley as a flagship species to address marine conservation issues with the fishing community, Department of Fisheries, Department of Wildlife and the general public, TREE Foundation’s community based sea turtle conservation work has and would further enhance efforts to recover turtle populations along the South Indian coastline and promote community involvement in conservation through training and stewardship opportunities.

While we were conducting sea turtle conservation programmes, we discovered other protected marine wildlife was being poached. Therefore, the scope of the outreach programmes has widened to include all protected marine species.

Community members, many of whom were egg poachers, are encouraged to consider sea turtle nest monitoring as a professional alternative livelihood. The programme continues to partner with coastal communities interested in assuming greater responsibility for sea turtle survival in southeast India, by facilitating beach patrols and the development of outreach materials.

TREE Foundation pioneered a successful community based conservation programme for the endangered olive ridley sea turtles nesting along the south eastern coast of India. TREE also initiated the sea turtle conservation community based programme in 2002 for fishers of 5 fishing villages, covering 13 km of the coast to protect nesting female turtles, their eggs and to reduce turtle mortality.

The olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea) nests on the southeast Indian coast (in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), and juvenile hawksbill turtles (Eretmochelys imbricata) and green turtles (Chelonia mydas), forage in the coastal waters of the area. However, no conservation measures had been initiated in the 110 km of Kancheepuram coast and 32 km stretch in Nellore (Andhra Pradesh) to where TREE Foundation has now expanded. Until 2008, local communities were unaware of the protection laws and importance of the turtles in the coastal marine ecosystem in these areas.

Community development: In helping to evolve a symbiotic and harmonious co-existence with nature and to develop self reliance among the community by identifying them as responsible key stakeholders in the resource, TREE seeks to facilitate sustained commitment to conservation goals by fostering capacity for livelihood diversification and income-generation.
Environment education: TREE’s environment education programme is focused on fisher-folk and students in schools and colleges in India, specifically along the east coast of India to improve environmental awareness and literacy.

TREE Roots & Shoots Eco Groups (A Dr. Jane Goodall Volunteer Network Program):

The TREE Roots & Shoots programme helps connect students through education, volunteering and communication to expand the member network for a wider reach and effective movement towards biodiversity conservation in India.

In addition to the above activities, TREE Foundation has also been the first non-governmental organisation to perform the satellite tagging of sea turtles, with technical expertise provided by Dr. Tony Tucker. TREE Foundation also carries out rescue and rehabilitation of sea turtles and marine mammals and conducts necropsy when necessary. TREE is also involved in the study of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins.

A brief profile of the Foundation’s activities between 2009 and 2010 is given below:

### Activity Duration Objectives Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Conference (annual)</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>To get teachers involved in conservation awareness programmes.</td>
<td>76 teachers from various schools in Chennai participated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flipper Fest (annual)</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>To spread awareness on marine biodiversity conservation to students.</td>
<td>1,100 students from 21 schools and 7 colleges participated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Clean Up day (annual)</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>To instill responsibility for reducing litter generation on beaches in Chennai and surrounding areas.</td>
<td>People who took part included 16 fishing villages in cleaning 14 tonnes of garbage from the beaches in front of their villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Summit - Eco Revolution (annual)</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>To involve and initiate students in to conservation, community and environment awareness activities and to form Roots &amp; Shoots Eco Groups.</td>
<td>123 students participated and 23 students joined as Roots &amp; Shoots members and took part in various TREE Foundation activities during 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based sea turtle conservation*</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>To initiate sustained community based sea turtle conservation.</td>
<td>30 villages participated in the conservation programme and released more than 12,000 olive ridley hatchlings to sea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Conducted jointly with the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department, Department of Fisheries and the Indian Coast Guard.

Where we work:

TREE Foundation is based in Chennai. Our activities are carried out along the coast of Chennai and Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh with plans to expand our programmes nationwide.

Support for the organisation:

TREE is supported by the Trustees’ personal funds, properties and well wishers. The Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department (Tamil Nadu) has supported the Sea Turtle Protection Force since 2006 with a stipend provided to members of the Force during the turtle nesting period. The Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department (Andhra Pradesh) has also supported the STPF from 2009 onwards. The National Biodiversity Authority of India has supported the annual Flipper Fest from 2007 onwards. Supraja Dharini has also received awards from the Whitley Fund for Nature for the year 2009 and grants from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, Peoples Trust for Endangered Species, Conservation Fund and Oak Foundation for Environment Awareness, Community Outreach and Sea Turtle Conservation Programs from 2010.
Plans for the future:

We aim to set up an institute for research and conservation to expand our current activities. We are currently pursuing further collaborations on projects and activities. We have also recently co-founded BEACON (Bay of Bengal Ecologists and Conservation Network) with field workers along the Bay of Bengal in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka for better conservation management in the Bay of Bengal region, with a special focus on marine mega fauna.

In association with the Department of Environment and Forests and Indian Coast Guard in the respective states, we will conduct prohibited marine species awareness workshops for Forest, Fisheries, Coast Guard and Marine Police for all the coastal states of India.

Role within the network:

In being an active member of the TAG network, we would like to share information whole heartedly with all members of the network. We would like to initiate a Turtle Recovery Program for the Indian coast with the participation and involvement of all members of TAG. With local TAG members from Vishakhapatnam (VISAKA SPCA) and Gujarat (Prakruti Nature Club) TREE Foundation has developed a network to jointly provide expertise on scientific methods necessary for turtle conservation (satellite tagging, flipper tagging, hatcheries management, biopsy sampling, necropsy procedures, data recording and standardisation), resource material design and development and to conduct prohibited marine species awareness workshops for officials and communities in the respective states. The first batch of STPFs from Chennai are the resource persons for training STPFs in these areas.

Contributed by Supraja Dharini, Founder – Trustee and Chairperson, TREE Foundation.

Contact information:

Supraja Dharini, Founder-Trustee and Chairperson, TREE Foundation.

Postal address:
63, First Avenue, Vettuvankeni, Chennai–600 041
Phone: +91 44 24492242; +91 9444052242 / 9941267035
Email: treefoundation2002@yahoo.com
Website: www.treefoundationindia.org
CONTENTS

Editorial

Kartik Shanker & Chloe Schäuble

The Turtle Action Group - A Network of NGOs dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats in India

1

TAG Member Profiles

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Andaman & Nicobar Environment Team (ANET)

3

Andhra Pradesh

Visakha Society for Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA)

6

Gujarat

Prakruti Nature Club (PNC)

8

Karnataka

Canara Green Academy (CGA)

9

Field Services and Inter-Cultural Learning, India (FSL)

11

Lakshadweep

Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre (LMRCC)

13

Maharashtra

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM)

15

Orissa

Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA)

16

Alacrity

18

Podampeta Ecotourism and Olive Ridley Protection Club (PEORP)

20

Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee (RSTPC)

22

Tamil Nadu

Students' Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN)

24

TREE Foundation

25

INDIAN OCEAN TURTLE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE - 13

ISSN 0973-1695

JANUARY 2011