

A brief update of sea turtle conservation activities of the Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Foundation

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The Vasant J. Sheth Sea Turtle Interpretation Centre, Rushikulya

The Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Foundation supported and developed the Vasant J. Sheth Sea Turtle Interpretation Centre at the Rushikulya beach in Orissa which is one of the largest nesting sites of the olive ridley sea turtles in the world. The centre is the only one of its kind situated close to an important nesting site of sea turtles in the country.

On an average the Rushikulya beach attracts over a hundred thousand olive ridley turtles every year for mass nesting - a phenomenon known as the 'arribada' (a Spanish word meaning 'arrival'). In 2006, I witnessed the arribada that took place in February. The Foundation has funded the Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee, an organisation of locals dedicated to sea turtle conservation and protection at Rushikulya for the

past decade. The interpretation centre has displays and information panels on sea turtle conservation, breeding, hatching and environmental threats to their survival. The arribada attracts several visitors to Rushikulya and we believe that the interpretation centre will perform an important role in educating them and spreading the message of marine turtle conservation.

Sea Turtle conservation in Maharashtra

The Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Foundation has funded Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra, an organisation working for the conservation of marine turtles on the Konkan coast of Maharashtra. Although Maharashtra does not witness arribadas like Orissa, sporadic nesting takes place almost throughout the coast. In the year 2006 more than 50 turtle nests were protected in hatcheries erected at the selected beaches and more than 300 hatchlings have been released into the sea.