

NOTES

Release of Juvenile Green Turtles in North Karnataka

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At dawn on May, 17, 2006, N.D. Bhat, Shankar Hegde and I gathered at Gangavali village near Honavara, North Karnataka to release an olive ridley and a green turtle into the wild. We were joined by Anand Udar, Range Forest Officer, Hiregutti. The green turtle had been caught as incidental catch by a fisherman in Gangavali about a year and a half prior to this day.

Turtles in these parts are revered and worshipped as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and hence most fishermen do intentionally not kill or harm them. However, they are often caught as by-catch in fishing nets; unless the nets are recovered on the same day, the turtles die. This turtle was very fortunate that it was recovered on the same day from the net, and hence it was alive. The olive

ridley hatchling was obtained from a relocated nest and brought up at the Gangavali Turtle Breeding Centre. The breeding centre was developed by Anand Udar and maintained by Gulabi Tandel and her family, changing the water periodically and feeding them with fish.

Anand Udar, N.D. Bhat, Shankar Hegde, the Tandel family and I watched along with dozens of curious locals as the turtles moved seawards. On reaching the tidal area, Gulabi Tandel approached the turtles, put her hand on their carapaces and said, “Both of you take care”. As both the turtles disappeared into the sea, we could only hope they overcome the many hurdles that they have to face and return to nest at Gangavali and produce a new generation of hatchlings.