

Sea Turtle Conservation in Kasargod District, Kerala

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Olive ridley turtles nest along the northern coast of Kerala from September-March. Naithal was established in 2001 and is involved in sea turtle conservation. The project area covers 15 km of the coastal belt of Kanhangad Municipality, Nileshwar Grama Panchayat and Padanna Grama Panchayat of Kasaragod District of Kerala. The eggs that are laid are collected and hatched at hatcheries constructed with the support of the Kerala Forest Department. The project has been undertaken with the support and co-operation of the Department of Forests and Wildlife.

In Kerala, such a participatory conservation project is undertaken only at Thaikadappuram (Nileshwaram) of Kasargod District and Kolavi of Calicut District. The project intends to instill the need and importance of protecting sea turtles among the people, who were formerly using turtle eggs for food. The project also intends to involve the public in conservation activities. The Environment Monitoring Forum, Cochin conferred the P.V. Thampi Memorial Environmental Award on Naithal in 2004 in recognition of our turtle conservation project.

In addition, Naithal has conducted a study on solid waste deposits and encroachment of Nileshwaram River and the report has been handed over to the Nileshwar Grama Panchayat. Naithal members were in the forefront of the fight against the burning issue of aerial spraying of Endosulfan in Kasaragod District. School children of the area, under the banner 'Naithal Kids' are also contributing to conservation activities in these areas.

Table 1: Relocation of sea turtle nests by Naithal from 2002 to 2007

Year	Number of Nests	Number of eggs collected	Number of hatchlings
2002 - 03	12	1,548	927
2003 - 04	26	3,216	1,853
2004 - 05	21	2,913	2,514
2005 - 06	24	3,119	2,817
2006 - 07	21	2,518	880 (out of 8 nests)