

Legislation for protection of Olive Ridley Turtles

All the five species of sea turtles occurring in India, including the Olive Ridley turtles, are legally protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Appendix I of the CITES Convention which prohibits trade in turtle products.

The mass nesting beach at Gahirmatha is a part of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and the waters around Bhitarkanika were declared as Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary in September 1997, to protect the nesting and breeding habitat of the Olive Ridley.

The coastal waters off Devi and Rushikulya rookery are declared as a no-fishing zone during the sea turtle breeding season under the Odisha Marine Fisheries Regulation Act (OMFRA), 1982 and Odisha Marine Fisheries Regulation Rules, 1983. The Coast Guard is empowered to enforce the provisions of the Act.

To reduce accidental entrapment and death of turtles, the Odisha Government has made it mandatory for the mechanized fishing trawlers to use Turtle Excluder Device or TEDs, which is a specially designed net with an exit cover that retains the catch while allowing the turtles to escape.