

OLIVE RIDLEY

Lepidochelys olivacea (Eschscholtz, 1829) washed ashore at Kovalam beach



IUCN Red List:

Global —
Vulnerable A2bd
(Abreu-Grobois, A.
& P. Plotkin, 2008)

Dead Olive Ridley Sea Turtle stranded in Kovalam beach, Chennai

Reptilia

[Class of Reptiles]

Testudines

[Order of Turtles,
Terrapins, Tortoises]

Cheloniidae

[Family of Marine Turtles,
Modern Sea Turtles]

Lepidochelys olivacea

[Olive Ridley]

Species described by
Eschscholtz in 1829

A dead Olive Ridley Sea Turtle was found washed ashore at Kovalam beach, nearby Chennai, on 12 January 2016. The turtle had two injuries a crashing wound on the head and severe puncture on the flipper and it's suspected that death was caused by incidental capture of gill net, ray net (*Thrukai valli*) or trawl net operated in this region. It is a matter of concern since the animal is endangered and is protected as per various international agreements. They are categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List with a globally decreasing population trend (Abreu-Grobois & Plotkin 2014). This species is also listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. It is listed in Annexure II of the SPAW (a Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife), Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna) and Appendices I and II of the Convention on Migratory



Species (the Bonn Convention).

Incidental catches of Olive Ridleys were reported at Pamban (Kasinathan 1988) and off Dhanushkodi (Krishna & Kasinathan 1989). The Olive Ridley is the only species of sea turtle known to nest along the Chennai coast (Abraham, 1990; Subramanean et al. 2004; Subramanean, 2005). Bhupathy et al.

Global Distribution :
South Asia: Bangladesh,
India (Andaman Is.,
Nicobar Is.), Pakistan,
Sri Lanka

(2007) stated that the stranding of an Olive Ridley in Chennai coastal waters indicate that, this area might be the feeding grounds, or possibly migratory pathways, for the species. Although, in recent years no recorded stranding of this species from Chennai coast. Details of morphometric measurements were as follows: Total length-94cm; curved carapace length-64cm; plastron length-52cm; plastron width-47cm; head length-21cm; tail length-14cm and weight-40kg (approximately).

The impact of trawler fishing in sea turtle is well documented in many parts of the world. Many sea turtles are found stranded nation-wide, with injuries primarily resulting from fishing activity. Mortality of sea turtles in trawling gear could be due to the lack of Trawler Efficiency Devices (TED) in the fishing nets, as TEDs are not mandatory on this area. It is suggested that trawler owners may be advised to have TED in their fishing gears. Importance of turtles, their role in healthy fishery and ethical values may be explained to the fisher folk people through various awareness programme. This may be done at grassroot levels with the participation departments such as forest, fisheries and students.

References

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Citation: Silambarasan, K. (2017). Olive Ridley: *Lepidochelys olivacea* (Eschscholtz, 1829) washed ashore at Kovalam beach. Reptile Rap#174. In: *Zoo's Print* 32(7): 18:19