



THE ORISSA MARINE RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION CONSORTIUM





## Objectives

- To reduce and prevent the over-exploitation of marine resources of Orissa.
- To work towards sustainable livelihoods for traditional fisherfolk in Orissa.
- To promote and facilitate collaborative sea turtle and fishery resource conservation actions in Orissa.
- To develop conflict management mechanisms to address fisheries and conservation related issues in Orissa.
- To advocate against polluting activities and environmentally unsustainable development practices in the coastal areas of Orissa.

## Achievements

With support from its members, the OMRCC has initiated advocacy efforts for turtle conservation and sustainable fisheries. The OMRCC has produced booklets and conducted workshops on marine conservation legislation and livelihood rights for fisherfolk. Posters depicting area-wise fishing regulations have been developed and displayed at the villages near the mass nesting beaches. All of these trainings and communication materials were produced in the local language (Oriya), and aim to create awareness on one of the significant conservation directions that many OMRCC members helped shape – the revised April 2005 orders of the CEC. The revised CEC orders recognize the fishing rights of the traditional fishing community and detail specific mechanisms to ensure the protection of sea turtles. The OMRCC advocates and intervenes to ensure the implementation of these measures in the field.



## The turtles of Orissa

The Orissa coast is home to at least three species of endangered sea turtles. This is one of the three coasts worldwide where annual *mass nesting* of the olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) occurs, when thousands of female turtles come ashore to synchronously lay eggs. Olive ridleys exhibit this fascinating behavior at three known beaches in Orissa: Devi, Rushikulya and Gahirmatha, which together account for more than half a million nesting turtles annually. Every year, olive ridleys arrive in Orissa's coastal waters to mate and lay their eggs. Weeks after the eggs are laid, thousands of tiny hatchlings emerge and struggle to make their way to the ocean. Years later, after traveling thousands of miles to distant feeding grounds, they will return to their native nesting beaches in Orissa and begin the cycle of life again.

### Threats to the olive ridley

Unfortunately, the olive ridley population in Orissa experiences unnaturally high mortality rates, with over 10,000 dead turtles washed ashore each year; a total of over 100,000 between 1990 and 2000. The major threats to sea turtles include incidental capture in fishing nets, loss of nesting habitats due to coastal development and artificial illumination surrounding nesting beaches, which disorients hatchlings and inhibits nesting of adults.

### Marine Laws

1972	The Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act	Protects endangered marine species
1982	Orissa Marine Fisheries (Regulation) Act (OMFRA)	Protects Orissa's fisheries
1997	Declaration of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary (GMS)	Prevents development and over-fishing in Gahirmatha
2002	The Central Empowered Committee (CEC)	Set up by the Supreme Court of India to help implement environment laws
2004	The CEC orders for coastal and marine conservation in Orissa	Provides specific details for a cohesive marine conservation strategy

### OMRCC's role in marine conservation

With help from fishworkers' unions, conservation groups, NGOs and scientists, the OMRCC aims at synthesising and upgrading conservation efforts, socio-ecological monitoring programmes, and policy advocacy towards appropriate marine conservation approaches in Orissa.



### Ongoing project activities

- Carrying out training programmes and developing materials for community-based sea turtle monitoring and conservation at specific sites in Orissa.
- Conducting participatory research experiments on the effects of various fishing gears and practices on turtles in Orissa's coastal waters.
- Creating communication material and disseminating information on relevant legislations for the conservation and management of coastal and marine resources in Orissa.
- Organising educational programmes on the impacts of pollution on marine ecosystems and supporting community campaigns for sustainable coastal development.
- Coordinating advocacy efforts to promote appropriate sea turtle conservation mechanisms for adoption by the Orissa government.

## Orissa's Marine Resources

Orissa is rich in various natural resources; numerous fishing communities dot the coastline, each profiting daily from a wide range of valuable marine resources. Sadly, recent years have seen endangered marine species, including the olive ridley sea turtle, commercial fish stocks, and thus Orissa's economically significant commercial fisheries face serious challenges. Daily, the coast is threatened by destructive fishing practices, water pollution by toxic effluents, illegal aquaculture, and the negative fall outs of coastal infrastructure like offshore oil and gas exploration and port development. Now more than ever, communities and wildlife alike need to meet the challenges that threaten to cause irreversible damage to Orissa's fragile marine environment.

### What is the OMRCC?

Amidst various efforts to protect these threatened resources, there existed one void in Orissa's conservation plan: the absence of a common platform where stakeholders could debate and develop appropriate conservation solutions together. To fill this need, in 2004, an informal body was created called the **Orissa Marine Resources Conservation Consortium (OMRCC)**. Its members include fishworkers' unions of Orissa, conservation organisations, development NGOs, turtle biologists, and individuals interested in sea turtle conservation measures and/or sustainable fisheries in Orissa. As a collective, the OMRCC can boast of various resources, skills, and expertise among a multitude of other diverse strengths. In recognition of the diversity of its members and their independent positions and approaches to conservation, the OMRCC aims to ensure that marine conservation action in Orissa is a coordinated, consensual and cooperative effort.



## Contact the OMRCC

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