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To,
The Hony. Editor,
The Indian Forester,
P.O. New Forest,
Dehra Dun (Uttarakhand).

Sub : Sea Turtle Rescued

Dear Sir,

A Leatherback turtle was rescued and released into the sea near Kanyakumari at Managudi on 23rd June 2009. Thanks to the fisher folk of Managudi village for their cooperation in releasing the rescued sea turtle. We are grateful to the Scientists of Bombay Natural History Society for the timely information rendered by them.

On receipt of information about the rescue of Leatherback turtle, the District Forest Officer, Kanyakumari acted swiftly and rushed up a special party headed by a Forest Range Officer to Managudi Estuary. After a great deal of effort, the fisher folk who caught hold of the sea turtle were convinced and motivated to release the same into the sea. The sea turtle, measuring 1.5 m in length, 1.00 m in width and 0.75 m in height with approximate weight of 350-400 kg, was allowed to swim happily into the sea.

Sea turtles are reptiles that spend their majority of life time in oceans and come to land for nesting. Five species of sea turtle namely Hawks Bill, Olive Riddley, Leatherback,





Loggerhead and Green turtle are found in the Indian seas. During the nesting season generally the female turtles only come to the shore for laying eggs at night. Usually they dig their nest to a depth of one metre. The incubation time varies between 45-70 days. Erupting out of the nest by the hatchlings generally takes place during night time at cool temperature. It is a group effort, which may take several days. The hatchlings emerge from the nest as a group and move towards the brighter horizon of the sea. It is strongly believed by Scientists that while the hatchlings move towards the sea they carry the imprint of geo-magnetic field, scent and visual picture of the area. The return of the adults to the same beaches where they were born for nesting is taken as a proof of the above phenomenon known as "Natal Homing".

Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), locally called 'Yezhuvarai' or 'Thoni amai', weighs upto 800 kg. This is the largest and heaviest sea turtle. They feed on jelly fish. They can dive to 400-1,200 m holding their breath upto half-an-hour. All the five sea turtles namely Olive Riddley Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivaceae*), Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) are covered under Schedule-I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Sea Turtles are considered as Flagship species because of their vulnerability, attractiveness or distinctness in order to gain support from the public at large which would encourage conservation of entire ecosystem and all species contained therein.

Yours Faithfully

Sd/-

V. Sundararaju,
District Forest Officer,
Kanniyakumari Division,
Nagercoil (Tamil Nadu)