

MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION IN MAHARASHTRA REPORT 2008-2009

We have undertaken Marine Turtle Conservation Project since last seven years i.e., 2002. During the year under report the project is implemental in 30 villages of costal Maharashtra. Aware campaigns were also arranged on entire coastline. Our achievements of this year viz total 155 nest were protected and 7884 hatchlings were released into the sea. Up till now 530 nests were protected and more than 25000 hatchlings were released.

UNDP Project

This is the second consecutive year of launching of Marine Turtle Conservation and Awareness through Community Participation in Maharashtra Project of UNDP, GEF, SGP, CEE Central. Foundation of Kasav Mitra Mandal at Velas is the highlight of the year. The following programmes were conducted at the project - villages namely Velas, Kelshi, Anjarla, Kolthare and Dabhol.

Kasav Mitra Mandal

The Kasav Mitra Mandal is established at Velas in Mandangad taluka, Dist- Ratnagiri with our help by local people who are willing to work for the Marine Turtle. The Mandal provides lodging and boarding facilities, guides, film-shows etc. on demand by the tourists and the visitors arriving at Velas, especially during our Turtle festivals. The mandal charges reasonably for those facilities and spare some small amount from such income towards the Marine Turtle Conservation fund. This fund is utilized exclusively for conservation of Marine Turtles at Velas. The volunteers, local youths, SHGs, Mahila Bachat Gats etc. have joined the Mandal as members. As such the locals see their income in these activities and they spontaneously participate. The livelihood and the conservation go hand-in-hand. This has been successfully proven at our project village, Velas. Kasav Mitra Mandal at Velas is unique at it's own through out the country.

Marine Turtle Knowledge Information Centre (MTKIC)

We have formed and established the MTKIC at Velas, taluka Mandangad, dist. Ratnagiri, the village under our Turtle Conservation Project. Most of the Olive Ridley turtles arrives at Velas for nesting purpose than any other centre as a result of which, naturally, the tourists/visitors are coming to this place in large numbers. They are very much eager to know about the Marine Turtles and it's lifestyle, because the scientists and the researchers are also there among the visitors. The information they require cannot be given over telephone in details. Under the circumstances we felt a need to erect a centre locally at Velas from where each and every information of the Marine Turtles can be had. The four walls of the hall of 20'X20' are covered with the flex boards with full information and the life cycle of the turtles, qualitative photographs are also provided with.

Turtle Friend Award (Kasav Mitra Puraskar)

We are giving Turtle Friend Award since 2006 to the individuals, NGOs, etc. who have done outstanding work towards the Marine Turtle every year to instigate the locals to come

forward for more participation in the project work. Our endeavor is receiving better response from them. This year the award went to Mr. Jayant Dattatray Kanade of Maral who is working wholeheartedly towards conservation and protection of the Marine Turtles. The Award consisting of Rs. 5000/- cash, the Trophy and the Certificate which is delivered by the hands of well-known film and TV star, Amruta Subhash.

Turtle Festival

We are organizing Turtle Festival since 2006 every year at Velas in Mandangad Taluka, Ratnagiri district. This is the consecutive fourth Turtle Festival held on 22/03/2009 and 23/03/2009. Such festival is organized jointly with the Forest department and the Gram Panchayat, Velas. Enthusiastic tourist / visitors including doctors, business- entrepreneurs, housewives, journalists, scientists, researchers, etc. have enjoyed the Turtle Festival. Nearly 1000 visitors have attended it. As Velas is situated at remote area there is no facility of lodging, boarding etc. easily available. Hence the villagers have to host them. For this purpose the locals have formed their SHGs, Mahila Bachat Gats, youth groups, etc., through our help and through which the tourists / visitors are accommodated by charging reasonably. Moreover the villagers can sell their own products like Kokum, kokum juice, amba poli, seasonal fruits like mangoes, cashew nuts etc. and earn for their livelihood. As such they have seen their income through the Turtle Festivals and their participation in the project work is increasing considerably.

Turtle Total Nests, Eggs and Hatchlings - 2008-2009

Sr. No.	Village	Nests	No. of Eggs	No. of Hatchlings
	Ratnagiri Dist.			
1	Velas	45	5152	2524
2	Anjarla	2	154	61
3	Kelshi	15	1643	739
4	Kolthare	10	128 + in-situ	634
5	Dabhol	18	1948	837
6	Murud	6	700	287
7	Karde	1	in-situ	42
8	Guhagar	1	151	36
	Raigad Dist.			
9	Murud Janjira	1		0
10	Diveagar	35	4250	1742
11	Harihareshwar	9	904	424
12	Maral	11	1214	558
	Thane Dist.			
13	Navapur	1	48	0
	Total	155	16292	7884

Upto 30/06/09 we have protected 530 nests and released more than 25000 hatchlings.

The second edition of Marathi version of the book " Marine Turtle - Conservation and Protection " by Ram Mone and Bhau Katdare, is published by the hands of Mr. Balwant Barve, the Trustee of Barve Charitable Trust, Pune. The DVD titled " Kasava Tuzyachsathi",

our own production, was released by the hands of famous TV and movie actress Amruta Subhash. The hatchlings were released into the sea through Mr. Balwant Barve, Trustee of Barve Charitable Trust, Pune and Amruta Subhash.

A debate was held by us with the visitors/tourists about Turtle Conservation movement. The tourists have enjoyed our DVD " Kasava Tuzyachsathi " conveying our overall work about the Marine Turtles. Again the hatchlings were released on second day of the festival. By doing all these activities are appealing the locals to participate in our efforts in big numbers and get acquainted with our project work.

Students Mela

Student Melas were arranged for a day at the each village covered under the project i.e., Dabhol, Kolthare, Kelshi and Anjarla with a view to create awareness amongst students about the nature, it's importance in our life, it's conservation and protection, turtle ecological importance. Our projects namely Marine Turtles, White-bellied Sea - Eagles, White-backed Vultures etc. also were described during such sessions using slide - shows, film - shows, exhibition, giving lectures etc. Total 916 students were benefited by our this campaign at 4 project village. This helps the students to know about the nature from their childhood.

Teacher's Training

Couples of Teachers Training were organized in Kutarekar Vidyalaya, Panchnadi and at Kelshi during the year. The subjects of Turtle conservation project, Biodiversity, Mangrove conservation, Environment Education etc. were included during these training programmes to create awareness amongst the teaching people and percolate it through them upto the students. These programmes were aided with the lectures, slide shows, film shows, exhibitions of photographs of birds, flowers, butterflies along with the turtles, by which the local diversities in the area could be understood. Total 142 teachers and non-teaching staff belonging to schools at Dabhol, Panchnadi, Kolthare, Chikhalgaon, Tere Vayangani, Agar Vayangani, Onanavase, Ade, Virsai, Mandivali, Anjarle, Kelshi in Dapoli Taluka, dist. Ratnagiri have attended the programmes.

Kasav Chashak Tournaments

The Kasav Chashak Tournament was played at Kolthare in Dapoli taluka, dist. Ratnagiri, the village where our Turtle Project is implemented. The locals have played the game of cricket with zeal and curious spectators have enjoyed it, especially by the young generation. Moderate prizes were also distributed to the winning teams. Lecture regarding turtle conservation was given during the tournament.

Shri. Shantilal Pokarna Charitable Trust Project

This year Marine Turtle Conservation Project was successfully completed at Diveagar, Maral and Harihareshwar in Raigad district under the sponsorship of Shri Shantilal Pokarna Charitable Trust, Pune. Total 55 nests were protected with 6368 eggs and from which 2724 hatchlings were released into the sea.

Awareness campaigns were also organized for the local villagers and slide and film shows, lectures, exhibitions, banners, posters etc., were used during it. The locals were including

students, youths, Mahila Bachat Gats, community members who have attended our programmes. Awareness workshops held at Diveagar, Maral and Harihareshwar by means of public addressing, distribution of handbills amongst the volunteers, villagers, sarpanchs, Mahila Bachat Gats, SHGs, youth groups etc. Our volunteers are also visiting to villages to make aware them about the nature and its importance in biodiversity.

Sahyadri Mitra, Mahad successfully monitor the work at Diveagar.

School Nature Club

School Nature Clubs are also promoted to be established at every school to make aware about flora and fauna along with turtles, its conservations. Our periodical visits, giving lectures, arranging slide/film shows etc., at various schools are included in our work. This year total 451 schools were visited and 62515 students were covered.

The response from the local villagers to our awareness campaigns is good and their participation in our movement is increasing. This, we feel, is our great achievement

The work of Nature conservation is not a job of any single individual or NGO. Hence we must proceed with hand- in- hand with the concerns falling in line. The involvement of the community is utmost essential in this work for continued processes. One can participate in our activities by donating in cash or kind. Such donations are exempted from Income Tax under 80G clause. We appeal to everybody to extend helping hand for conserving the nature for the sake of the mankind.

Work in Other Areas

We are working on Marine Turtles Conservation at 30 villages on entire coastal area of Maharashtra State. Out of 30 villages this work is being done at 8 villages under UNDP, SGP,CEE, and Shri. Shantilal Pokarna Charitable Trust, Pune Projects. We are working on the project with our own at the rest of 22 villages by monitoring for the nesting sites. We have succeeded in protecting nests and releasing hatchlings into the Sea. It can be ascertained from the following chart. We are since also arranging awareness programmes in these villages.

It is our prime duty to express our gratitude to UNDP, GEF, SGP, CEE Delhi and Central, Mr. Prabhjyotsing Sondhi, Mr. Kapil Sahasrabuddhe, Mr. Satish Awate, Shri. Shantilal Pokarna Charitable Trust and it's trustees, Barve Charitable Trust, Pune. Mr. Badrish Kulhalli, Mumbai, Mrs. Vimal Ghanekar, Pune, Mr. Kaustubh Shejwalkar, Ambarnath and many more, all donors, village Sarpanchs, villagers, Forest Departments and all the well wishers towards their guidance, help, sponsorship, involvements etc. without which we would not have maintained our tempo in achieving our goal.