



OF INDIA

# OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLES

The olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is one of the smallest and the most abundant of all sea turtle species. They are named after the olive green colour of their shell and adults grow to 2-2.5 feet in length and weigh between 35-45 kg. They are found in the tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

## DIET

Olive ridley turtles are opportunistic generalists which means that they can occupy a wide range of foraging habitats from the open sea to nearshore areas and prey on a wide range of organisms, including crustaceans, jellyfish, tunicates, algae, and fish.

## REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY

Mating occurs in nearshore waters along the nesting beaches. Females usually nest every 1-3 years and lay up to 3 clutches per nesting season. Each clutch consists of 80-120 eggs on an average. Hatchlings emerge after 45-60 days of incubation.

In addition to solitary nesting, olive and kemp's

ridley turtles also exhibit a unique mass nesting behaviour called the **arribada**, meaning "arrival" in Spanish, where hundreds of thousands of female ridleys nest together which ensures that more offspring escape from predators when they hatch and go into the sea. The arribada usually occurs once a year in India and lasts for about 2-10 days.

## DISTRIBUTION

In India, olive ridley turtles nest mostly during the dry season between December and April. Solitary nesting occurs all along the west coast from Gujarat to Kerala and the Lakshadweep Islands; and on the east coast from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Mass nesting takes place on the coast of Odisha at Rushikulya and Gahirmatha and in smaller numbers at Cuthbert Bay in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

