

Sea Turtles of India



Olive ridley
Lepidochelys olivacea

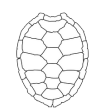


60-70 cm

The smallest and most abundant of all species, the olive ridley turtle gets its name from the olive green colour of its heart-shaped shell. Olive ridleys travel across vast open oceans and feed on a variety of marine invertebrates and fishes. While solitary nesting occurs all along the coastline of India, olive ridleys also exhibit a unique mass nesting behaviour termed 'arribada', where hundreds of thousands of ridleys nest together over 2-10 days.

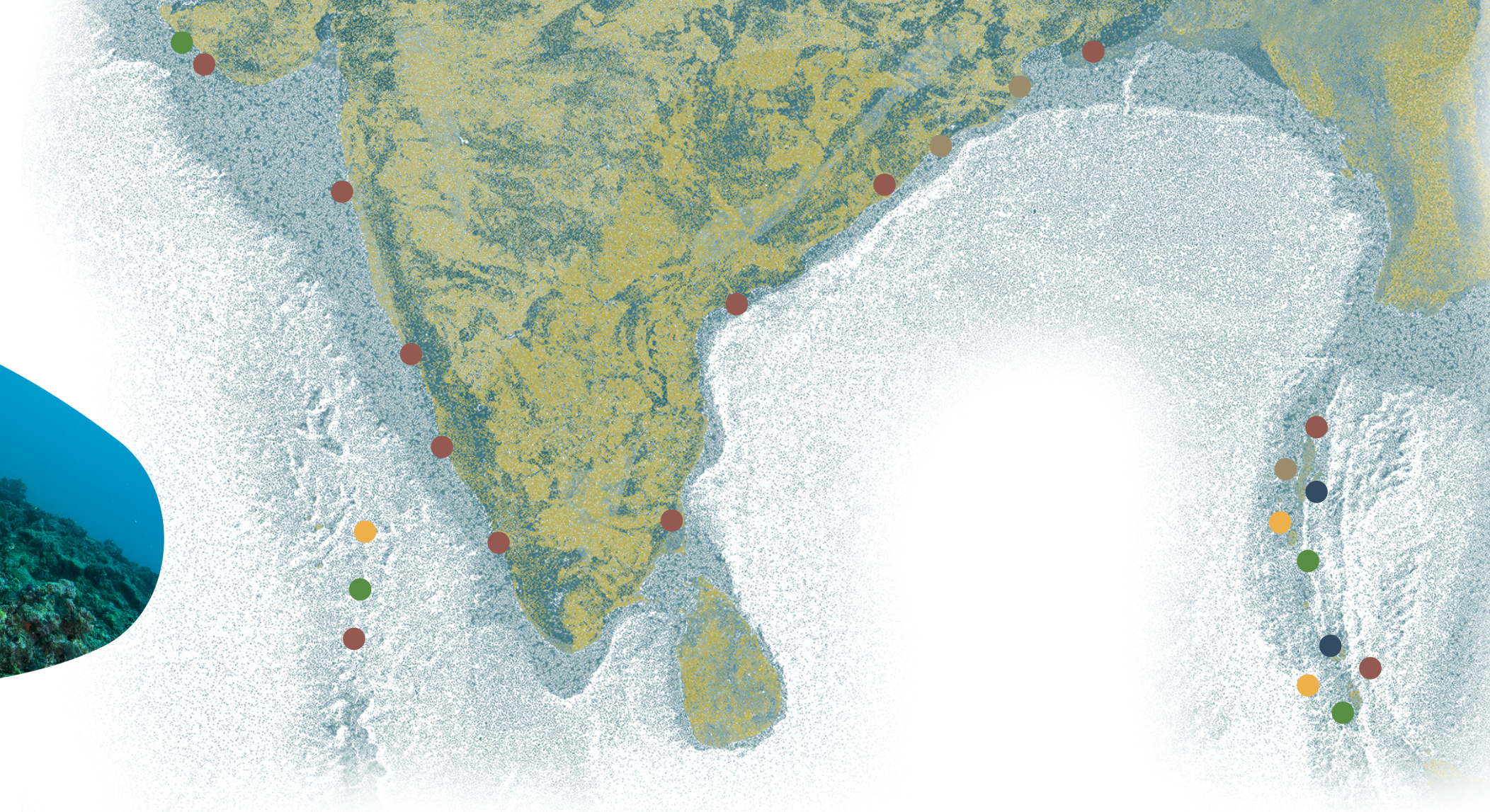


Hawksbill
Eretmochelys imbricata



70 – 90 cm

Hawksbill turtles get their name from the unique, narrow shape of their beak-like jaws. This allows the turtle to feed on sponges, crustaceans, and molluscs within crevices in coral reefs. These turtles are at home in reefs and lagoons, where they have plenty to eat. Hawksbills have been hunted for centuries for their shells, popularly referred to as “tortoiseshell”, which is used to make ornaments, jewellery, and other decorative items.



State-wise Distribution of Sea Turtles in India

● Olive ridley mass nesting sites
 ● Olive ridley solitary nesting sites
 ● Hawksbill
 ● Leatherback
 ● Green



Loggerhead
Caretta caretta



80 – 110 cm

Loggerhead turtles are named after their large heads and strong jaws. This species does not nest on the Indian coast and is found only rarely in offshore waters. They are primarily carnivorous, feeding on shellfish that inhabit the bottom of the ocean, which they crush with their powerful jaws.



Green
Chelonia mydas

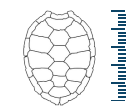


90 – 120 cm

Green turtles are named after the colour of their fat. As adults, they are mega-herbivores and feed predominantly on seagrasses and algae. Green turtles are found in high abundance in the Lakshadweep Islands as the calm shallow lagoons offer prime feeding grounds. The meat was widely consumed for centuries and green turtle soup was considered a delicacy.



Leatherback
Dermochelys coriacea



140 – 180cm

Named after their soft, “leathery” shell, the leatherback turtle is the largest of the world’s sea turtles and can grow to over 6 feet and weigh more than 700 kg! They often migrate thousands of kilometres to breed and, despite their enormous size, feed almost exclusively on jellyfish. They can dive to depths of 1,200m and foray into sub-arctic waters withstanding lower temperatures than any other reptile.

