

AT LEAST 8 OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLES WASH ASHORE DEAD ALONG CHENNAI'S SOUTHERN COAST

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Olive Ridley turtle carcasses seen on the beach in Palavakkam along East Coast Road. | Photo Credit: M. Karunakaran

At least eight Olive Ridley turtles have washed ashore dead along the southern coast of Chennai over the last three days.

As the annual season of turtle nesting begins, so have the deaths. On Tuesday, carcasses of two Olive Ridleys were seen on Thiruvanmiyur beach and at least four near Injambakkam. Residents promptly buried the carcasses in Injambakkam after notifying the Forest Department. They said a few more were found dead over the weekend. When *The Hindu* visited Palavakkam, two more dead Olive Ridleys were seen.

While the oil spill in early December 2023 in Ennore raised concern on the possible perils to Olive Ridley turtles that visit the beaches of the city to nest, Wildlife Warden E. Prasanth ruled out the spillage as the reason for the deaths.

"It is not [due to] oil spill. From January to March, the beaching of 150 to 200 turtles is normal. In the recent cases, it was confirmed by the vet that there were injury marks, so they may have been hit by trawlers. The ocean current also brings turtles that die in the waters to the shore," he said. However, Mr. Prasanth added that a clear picture of the effects of the oil spill on Olive Ridley nesting would emerge only as the season progresses.

Forest Department guards and volunteers from organisations, such as the Students' Sea Turtle Conservation Network and TREE Foundation, patrol the beaches to transport turtle eggs to hatcheries as the stray dog menace is high. "Hatcheries in Besant Nagar, Pulicat, Injambakkam, and Kovalam are ready," Mr. Prasanth said.

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