

Hawksbill Turtle

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Conservation

Why in News?

A juvenile hawksbill turtle stranded on the Tamil Nadu coast was rehabilitated for over two months and released in the Gulf of Mannar.

- It is a ***small to medium-sized marine reptile*** easily recognized by its narrow, pointed beak resembling that of a bird of prey and its strikingly beautiful, patterned shell.
- **Common Name** - Hawksbill Turtle.
- **Scientific Name** - *Eretmochelys imbricata*.
- **Genus** - *Eretmochelys*.
- **Kingdom** - Animalia.
- **Family** - Cheloniidae.
- **Habitat** - Tropical coral reefs and seagrass beds.
- Strongly associated with **coral reef ecosystems** and shallow coastal waters.
- **Distribution** - Tropical and subtropical oceans across the Atlantic, Pacific, and **Indian Oceans**.
 - **In India** - They are found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, and occasionally near the Gulf of Mannar.
- **Morphology** -
 - Medium-sized marine turtle.
 - **Beak** - Narrow (Hawk-like shape).
 - **Carapace** - Overlapping serrated scutes (tortoiseshell pattern) only sea turtle species with a truly "imbricate" or overlapping shell pattern.
 - **Weight** - 45-70 kg as adults.
 - **Shell lengths** - 60-90 cm.



- **Diet - Spongivorous** - Primarily sponges, algae, seagrass, and small invertebrates.
- **Conservation Status** -
 - **IUCN Red List** - Critically Endangered.
 - **CITES** - Appendix I (trade strictly prohibited).
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (India)** - Schedule I.
- **Threats** - Entanglement in fishing gear, illegal trade for tortoise-shell, coral reef degradation, and climate change affecting nesting beaches together pose severe threats to the survival of hawksbill turtles.

Reference

[The Hindu | Hawksbill Turtle](#)