

# India's Coastal and Marine Treasure Chest

It is thought that there are a far greater number of organisms in our oceans than there are stars in the sky. From microscopic phytoplankton (plants) that contribute a large portion of the oxygen that organisms depend on for their survival, cone snails that can produce over 200 toxins and are now being used in medicines, horseshoe crabs that have over ten eyes and can see ultraviolet light, to the gentle gigantic whales that grace our waters, the mosaic of coastal and marine organisms and their unique life history strategies are mindboggling! According to scientists, we are yet to discover nine in ten of all species on Earth, most of them in the oceans.

More than 20% of India's population lives along the coast. Notwithstanding this, India's waters alone are known to house over 15,000 marine species and we are the third largest producer of fish in the world. This poster is a glimpse into our coastal and marine animal diversity. We hope you will be encouraged to learn more about our astounding marine diversity and contribute towards conservation efforts.

To discover more about India's coastal and marine treasures, dive into [www.fishtalesindia.org](http://www.fishtalesindia.org)

**Greater flamingo**  
The Rann of Kutchh is also known as Flamingo City. Several hundred breeding Greater flamingos, the state bird of Gujarat, congregate here.

**Hilsa**  
Hilsa are essentially marine fish, but lay their eggs in large rivers (hence well known for their anadromous migration). They are a favourite delicacy in West Bengal.

**Saltwater crocodile**  
Saltwater crocodiles are the largest living crocodilians on Earth; India is the western most of their habitat range. Some of the largest individuals are found in the Sundarbans (West Bengal) and Bhitarkanika (Odisha) mangrove forests.

**Whale shark**  
Several important natal (place of birth) grounds of whale sharks are in Gujarat. One of the world's most dedicated rescue operations for this fish (the largest fish on the planet) occurs along our coast.

**Irrawady dolphin**  
Irrawady dolphins are genetically related to the Killer Whale; they are highly endangered with only one remnant population found in India in Chilika Lake (Odisha) - a declared Ramsar site.

**Fiddler crab**  
An estimated 600 species of marine crabs, including Fiddler crabs, have been recorded in Indian waters. They are generally found in all coastal and marine habitats in India.

**Horseshoe crab**  
Odisha is home to one of the four remaining species of horseshoe crabs in the world. These living fossils are said to carry a potential cure for cancer. Their numbers are declining worldwide.

**Oceanic White-tipped reef shark**  
This shark was recently afforded greater protection under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to which India is Party. It is estimated that there are more than 70 species of shark in India.

**Olive Ridley**  
Gahirmatha beach in Odisha is one of the largest mass synchronized nesting sites of Olive Ridley turtle in the world, though these nesting events do not occur every year.

**Leatherback**  
Leatherback turtles, the largest of the seven marine turtles, nest almost exclusively in the Nicobar Islands in India. These Islands support the largest populations in the Asia region.

**Mudskipper**  
An estimated 20 species of mudskippers are found in the mangrove habitats and associated intertidal mudflats along coastal India. Mudskippers are amphibious and can spend up to six hours on land.

**Sea snake**  
An estimated 22 known species of sea snakes are found in India; all, except for one species, are viviparous (giving birth to live young) and do not come on land.

**Dugong**  
Dugongs in India are found in the Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kutchh and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. They are endangered and protected under India's Wildlife Protection Act.

**Blue-spotted stingray**  
Blue-spotted stingrays range in habitat all the way from Africa to Indonesia. In India, nine species of sharks and rays (elasmobranchs) are currently protected under India's Wildlife Protection Act.

**Yellow seahorse**  
Yellow seahorses are protected under India's Wildlife Protection Act. Seahorses are unique in that males commonly care for the fertilized eggs, carrying them on their body until they hatch. Successful captive breeding programmes in Goa and other coastal states are ongoing to reduce the stress on wild populations.

**Giant clam**  
There are three known species of Giant clam in India. The Lakshadweep Islands have the only community based conservation area for protection of giant clams in the country.

**Nudibranch**  
More than 3,000 species of nudibranch are known worldwide. In India, over 52 species of nudibranch (commonly known as sea slugs) have been recorded from the coral reefs of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands alone.

**Textile cone shell**  
The Textile cone shell is a predatory gastropod; its venom is capable of killing an adult human. They are commonly found in the Indian waters and traded for their colorful shells.

**Pearl spot**  
Pearl spot (known in Malayalam as Karimeen) is the state fish of Kerala and also a popular delicacy.

**Cormorant**  
The Vembanand Kol wetlands and backwaters of Kerala, support more than 1% of the world's breeding population of cormorants. This Vembanand Kol is also a declared Ramsar site.

**Starfish**  
Starfish is an echinoderm Echinoderms which include star fish, sea urchins, sand dollars and sea cucumbers. There are more than 200 echinoderm species in India.