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National Seminar on “Fifty Years of Crocodile Conservation: Learnings and way ahead”

Bhubaneswar: 18/06/2025

A National Seminar on “Fifty Years of Crocodile Conservation: Learnings and way ahead” was organized in Bhubaneswar today in collaboration with the State Wildlife Headquarters, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department.

Inaugurating the Seminar, Padmashri Professor Priyambda Mohanty Hejmadi, Former Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University, said that when the Government of India launched the Crocodile Conservation Project on April 1, 1975, Odisha emerged as the first centre of scientific efforts in the field of crocodile conservation in the country. Just two months after the project was launched, i.e. in June 1975 the first gharial crocodile and saltwater crocodile hatchlings were hatched from the Tikarpada and Dangmal centres. In the last 50 years, our state has saved three endemic species – the saltwater crocodile, the mugger and the gharial – from the brink of extinction. Study and research on wild crocodiles - both adults and young - is essential to observe their reproductive movements, courtship, nesting, pup behaviour, maternal protection and dispersal patterns. Genetic studies are also important for the long-term survival of crocodiles in the Mahanadi, said Professor Hejmadi.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief of Forest Force Shri Suresh Pant added that the increase in the number of saltwater crocodiles in Bhitarkanika National Park from 96 to 1880 in five decades is a major achievement of crocodile conservation efforts in Odisha. Natural breeding in Satkosha Gorge has revived crocodiles, increasing their number to 16. More than 200 freshwater crocodiles have been recorded this year, indicating their recovery from habitat loss. Forest department initiatives such as compensation for crocodile victims and construction of safe bathing facilities are intended to reduce human-crocodile conflict. However, habitat loss, reduction in nesting grounds, dams and sand mining are creating new challenges in the field of human-crocodile conflict. Shri Pant stated that continuous awareness, habitat protection and scientific research are very important to ensure the sustainable conservation of crocodiles.

Dr. Artatran Mishra, Deputy Director General of Forest Ministry, Government of India, said that Odisha is the only state in India where three crocodile species - Dangmal in Bhitarkanika for the saltwater crocodile (Baula), Ramatirth in Shimilipal for the Mugger and Satkosha in Tikarpada for the Gharial - are located. Odisha has also produced India's first PhD in the field of crocodile research, which is a matter of pride and honor for the state. Odisha's leadership in crocodile conservation science is recognized today. Odisha's contribution towards crocodile conservation in the last five decades has proven to be groundbreaking, said Shri Mishra.

Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Shri Saroj Kumar Patnaik had suggested that the state government should conduct a fresh survey to identify new habitat for the gharial crocodile.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden Shri Prem Kumar Jha delivered the welcome address and said that the golden jubilee of crocodile conservation in Odisha is the most successful wildlife conservation story in India.

Chief Conservator of Forests and Director of Nandankanan Dr. Manoj V. Nayyar proposed the vote of thanks.

Four technical sessions were held afterwards. The theme of the first session was Saltwater Crocodile Conservation: Problems and Challenges. Former Senior Research Officer Dr. Sudhakar Kar and Senior Scientist Dr. Pratyush Mohapatra were the speakers of the session presenting forgotten facts about crocodile conservation. The session, which was moderated by Shri Lade Dayananda Gajanan, was chaired by Former

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Dr. Ajit Patnaik, CCMB Chief Scientist Dr. Karthikeyan Vasudevan, Rajnagar DFO Shri Yadav Sudarshan Gopinath participated in the panel discussion and expressed their views.

The theme of the second session was Conservation of Gharials. Former Senior Research Officer Dr. Lala Ashwini Kumar Singh and Senior Scientist Dr. Abhijit Das were the speakers of the session and shared their experience on crocodile conservation. In this session, which was moderated by Shri Samyak Samantara, Dr. Ajit Patnaik, ex-pccf, CCMB Chief Scientist Dr. Karthikeyan Vasudevan, Rajnagar DFO Shri Yadav Sudarshan Gopinath participated in the panel discussion and expressed their views.

The theme of the third session was the Ex-situ conservation of crocodilians in Odisha and the conservation of Muggers. Dr. Sudarshan Maharana, Advisor, Population Recovery of Gharial in River Mahanadi project, and Dr. Manoj V. Nair, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), spoke on the conservation of muggers. The session was held under the moderatorship of Athagarh DFO Dr. Yagnadatta Pati. Former Indian Forest Service Officer Dr. Sudarshan Panda, Environmental Officer of Paradip Port Shri Manoj Mohapatra, Berhampur DFO Shri Suni Khokhar participated in the panel discussion and expressed their views.

The theme of the fourth session was the perspectives from the States and way ahead. The panel discussion was held under the moderatorship of Chilika DFO Shri Amlan Nayak and Professor Sushil Kumar Dutta of Don Bosco University, Assam, Scientist Dr. Bivas Pandav and Retired Indian Forest Service Officer Dr. Arun Mishra delivered their speeches.



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