

Release of Saltwater Crocodile or Estuarine Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in Sundarban Biosphere Reserve on 21st January 2021

The Sundarban is a unique mangrove habitat with its numerous ecological niches which is habitat of 1586 faunal sp. The Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) is the largest of all crocodilians and has a good population in Sundarban. The last assessment of Saltwater Crocodile in Sundarban recorded 240 numbers of individual (141 direct sighting and 99 indirect sighting) in 1163.20km.



The Conservation Breeding Programme is a science of conserving a species by preventing imminent population collapse in the wild due to a large number of eliminative pressures (i.e. habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, industrialization, poaching, illegal trade and climate change etc.). The aim of the Conservation Breeding Programme is to conserve the genetic diversity of the species and restock or reintroduce the species to re-establish self sustaining population in its natural wild habitat.

Due to climate change and increasing habitat destruction, the coastal areas where Saltwater Crocodile is normally breed is decreasing which may affect the population in near future.



Conservation breeding or *ex-situ* breeding programme project of Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) at Bhagabatpur, Sundarban, Dist. South 24 Parganas was started in 1976 to increase the population of this Schedule I species under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and under CITES Appendix I. The project plays an important role to form a viable population of Saltwater Crocodile which can benefit *in-situ* conservation of the species.

In 1976, 32 numbers of crocodile eggs were collected from 'Dabarkhana Khal' of Sundarban and from 1982 the collection of eggs started from the project site itself. Now, the Saltwater Conservation Breeding Site has 6 numbers of breeding pools of different sizes and 14 numbers of enclosures containing water tank for keeping hatchlings of different age groups and a total number of 629 crocodiles have been released in Sundarban from 1979 to till date.



Presently 5 male and 5 female sexually matured crocodile acts as breeding or mating pair. They collect nest materials from project site and lay eggs in the nest. Usually the mating pairs are observed in March and in May the female lays 25 to 90 eggs in their natural nests. The staffs of conservation breeding centre collected the eggs within 15 days and keep the eggs in artificial nests. The temperature maintains 29^o to 32^oC thrice a day and maintains desired humidity. Within 80 to 85 days, the hatchlings come out.

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This year, 55 numbers of sub-adult crocodiles (including 40 male, 15 female with average length 1.26 meter, breadth 0.377 meter and weight 14.26 Kg with average age of 4 years) has been released in following locations –

Sundarban Tiger Reserve

☞ Store Khali	02 numbers
☞ Garankati Char	02 numbers
☞ Ludirduani	01 numbers

05 numbers

24 Parganas (South) Division

☞ Rakesh Khali near Lothian	07 numbers
☞ Kalas	15 numbers
☞ Chulkati	16 numbers
☞ Sundarkati (Bonnie Camp)	12 numbers

50 numbers