

14 islands in Bhitarkanika national park included under HDCIP

Odisha Sun Times Bureau

Kendrapara, Jul 30:

Fourteen idyllic islands located within the Bhitarkanika national park in Odisha's Kendrapara district have been identified for comprehensive conservation under the Central government's Holistic Development of Coastal Islands Project (HDCIP).



Under the HDCIP project, funds will be provided by the Union Ministry of Environment & Forest for conservation of nature in these unmanned islands with its wetland sites and rich reserve of flora and fauna.

The included islands are Nasi, Havelikati, Babubali, Kalibhanjadia, Sort, Nadiabali and Hukitola, informed Forest department officials.

“We had sent the list of islands to the Union Ministry of Environment & Forest as desired by it. It has given its approval for undertaking the makeover project in the earmarked islands,” said Bimal Prasanna Acharya, DFO Rajnagar Mangrove (wildlife) Forest Division.

Acharya claimed that the department had submitted details of population maps, flora and fauna of the islands in accordance with the guidelines prescribed by the Union Ministry.

“We had mentioned in our report that Nasi, Havelikati and Babubali islands within the Gahiramatha marine sanctuary are known as the rookery of the Olive Ridley sea turtles. In March this year, 41, 33,334 turtles laid eggs in the islands. Kalibhanjadia, Sort and Nadiabali islands within the Bhitarkanika national park are known for dense mangrove forests and the creeks and water bodies of these islands are home to many salt water crocodiles,” Acharya said.

The DFO said these islands are also home to a large number of migrant bird species in the winter and are the abode of 13 wildlife species including spotted deer, sambar, hyena, wild boar, rhesus macaque, common langur, jackal, fishing cat, jungle cat, mongoose, wolf and fox.

The Hukitola island is better known as breeding place of horse shoe crabs.

Emphasis is being laid these days on horse shoe crab conservation due to its medicinal value. Known as the living fossil, the neglected horseshoe crab is the latest to join the long list of endangered species in Wildlife Protection Act, Acharya said.

Horse shoe crab, considered an important organism for its medicinal value, is also useful as an indicator of the health of the coastal zone, he added.

The Hukitola island, with its remnants of majestic buildings with wooden staircases and rain water harvesting system, is the symbol of the glorious past of Kendrapara district. The place attracts students, scholars and history lovers due to its ideal geographical location close to the Bay of Bengal. The state tourism department has also included the island in the state's tourist map, officials said.

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