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Sign up for a turtle walk conducted by Students Sea Turtles Conservation Network on Fridays and Saturdays. The walk is along the east coast from Neelankarai beach to Elliots beach.

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STALK THE SEA, SAVE A TURTLE !

Dhuruv studying in Vidya Mandir.

"The hatchlings are genetically programmed to move towards a bright light source. And it used to be reflecting waters of the sea. But now, they move towards the sodium and mercury vapor lamps on the roads, only to perish. Added is the occasional poaching and challenge from predators," laments Adith, a volunteer of Students Sea Turtles Conservation Network.

"We have written to the wildlife warden to consider switching off beachside lights between 11pm and 4 am, during the hatching weeks," says Arun of SSTCN.

Framed by constellations of the Southern Cross and the Great Bear, the starlit night sky revealed a couple of turtle carcasses too. "Last year we did not sight a single dead turtle. Fear following the Tsunami, had kept trawlers away from the "Turtle Corridor". But this year we have counted 27 turtle carcasses so far", re-

vealed Arun. "This year we have also seen spongy, spiked puffer fish, sea snakes, eels and cuttle fish washed ashore, during our walks," he says.

The turtle hatchery located at a dark patch of the Theosophical society beach, now has about 39 relocated nests. The walk is open to public on Fridays and Saturdays. And it happens from Neelankarai beach to Besant Nagar, between midnight and 4am. For details contact, Arun: 24901019, Adith: 9884053854.

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Poor thing!"

The bespectacled girl exclaimed, as Arun gently held aloft for all to see, a flaying, black turtle hatchling. The sand near the ferreted turtle nest was teeming with the crawlers. It was an hour after midnight on Friday, at the sands of Kottivakkam beach. Children and adults trudged together in a night-walking exercise, to collect and relocate eggs of the endangered Olive Ridley turtles. The turtles nest here between December and March.

The scouting team had spotted hatchling tracks at a high end of the beach. And veteran Vinod had located the nest with his probe.

"Who pushed the sand?" cried a young boy at the excavated nest. "Oh! These are moving!" "Atul, Abhi, don't go so close", cautioned a voice in the dark. "Shall we release them into the sea?" asked another voice.

"This is my first turtle walk and I am enjoying it," declared young