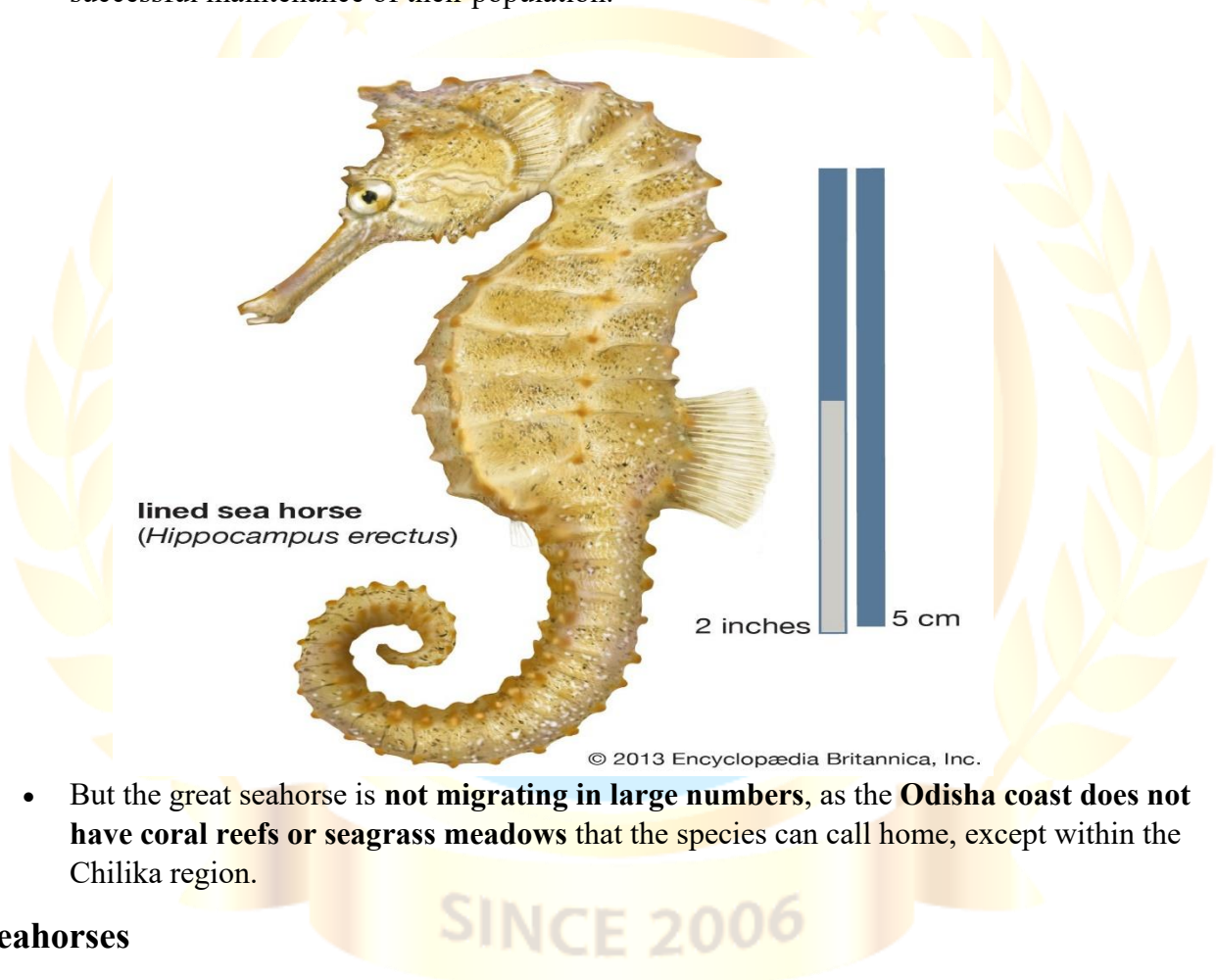




## SEAHORSE: SPECIES OF THE DAY

Extensive fishing off the **Coromandel coast** could be forcing the **great seahorse** to migrate laboriously **toward Odisha**.

- The 1,300 km **northward migration of the great seahorse from Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar** to Odisha is likely a response to **extensive fishing activities around the southern coast of India**. The species is abundant off the Coromandel coast (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) but is under extensive fishing pressure.
- Seahorses are **poor swimmers** but migrate by rafting — clinging to floating substrata such as **macroalgae or plastic debris** for dispersal by ocean currents – to new habitats for successful maintenance of their population.



- But the great seahorse is **not migrating in large numbers**, as the **Odisha coast does not have coral reefs or seagrass meadows** that the species can call home, except within the Chilika region.

### Seahorses

Seahorses are a type of marine fish that are named for their **distinctive head and neck**, which resemble those of horses.

- **Geographical Distribution:**

Generally found in shallow tropical and temperate waters throughout the world.

- There are **46 species of seahorses reported worldwide**. The coastal ecosystems of India house **nine out of 12 species found in the Indo-Pacific**, one of the hotspots of seahorse



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populations that are distributed across diverse ecosystems such as seagrass, mangroves, macroalgal beds, and coral reefs.

- These **nine species are distributed along the coasts of eight States and five Union Territories from Gujarat to Odisha**, apart from Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Conservation status:**
  - **Twelve seahorse species** are listed as “**vulnerable**” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, one step down from endangered. An additional 17 species are understudied, and listed as “data deficient.” Two are endangered.
  - **Appendix II of CITES**
- **Threats:**
  - They are declining due to the **overexploitation for traditional Chinese medicines and ornamental fish.**
  - **Habitat degradation** by anthropogenic activities.
  - Despite the ban on fishing and trading activities on seahorses from 2001, clandestine fishing and trading still take place in India.

