

## Four Asian vulture species now on highest protection list

Several species of vultures, including four that have India on their migratory routes, were awarded the highest protection by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals on Saturday.

The whale shark, which inhabits the Indian Ocean, got global protection too. However, the proposal to extend additional protection to the chinkara or Indian gazelle was withdrawn, the summit's organisers said.

The week-long convention in Manila concluded with approvals for protection of 34 species in submissions made by 24 countries from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe and Oceania.

Delegates from 91 countries had attended the summit, the next edition of which will be held in India in 2020.

The Asian vultures that are set to get collaborative international protection are the red-headed vulture, white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture and slender-billed vulture. They are faced with threats such as poisoning, hunting, collision with electricity cables and habitat degradation.

A subspecies of the black noddy, the yellow bunting and the lesser and great grey shrike are the other avians on the protected list.

Widespread over-fishing is driving many shark species, including the whale shark, to extinction. India is among 121 nations whose waters are home to sharks threatened with near extinction. The major threats are bycatch in nets and vessel strikes.

Proposals for conservation of the blue shark and common guitarfish have also been accepted. A resolution to develop and manage protected area networks within the ASEAN region has been adopted, a spokesperson said. Proposals submitted by Mongolia to protect two of Central Asia's rarest species, Przewalski's horse and the Gobi bear, also got the nod.

The Caspian seal has also been identified for conservation. It is the only marine mammal found in the world's largest inland sea, where its migration is prompted by ice formation and foraging.

"The conference in Manila has been a real game changer for the Convention. An intensive week of negotiations have resulted in a stronger commitment by countries to step up their efforts to conserve the planet's migratory wildlife," said a statement from the Convention's Executive Secretary Bradnee Chambers.

Protecting migratory species poses particular difficulties since they cross borders, including possibly moving to countries with less stringent wildlife protection systems, said Mr. Chambers.

### Multi-nation approach

Governments also agreed to cooperate on reducing the negative impact of marine debris, noise pollution, renewable energy and climate change on the lives of migratory species.

Lions, chimpanzees, giraffes and leopards were marked out as species that needed additional protection.

More than 120 states are party to the Convention, but this does not include China and many other

Asian countries.

“We’re trying to work to bring China onboard as a member of the Convention. We have been engaging them and they are actually doing quite a bit,” Mr. Chambers told reporters.

“What it required is positive engagement with the country to see how to find solutions instead of just bashing the country and looking at the negative side.”

The summit held in Manila has been the largest in the 38-year history of the Convention, which is also known as the Bonn Convention after the German city in which it was signed.

*(With inputs from AFP)*

Jaggi Vasudev’s Rally for Rivers claims they will, but this is not based on the most nuanced science

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