

VULTURE CULTURE: HOW THE BIRD WAS SAVED FROM EXTINCTION

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

The slender-billed vulture, which is one among the three bred at the VCBC in Pinjore, Haryana. special arrangement

In the late 1990s, when the population of the vultures in the country had begun to decline sharply, one White-backed vulture was rescued from Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan, where vultures were dying at an alarming rate.

To study the cause of deaths of vultures, a Vulture Care Centre (VCC) was set up at Pinjore, Haryana. It was here that the rescued vulture from Rajasthan was brought. Later, a few more vultures from Haryana, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh were brought in.

Starting with just a few vultures, the VCC, until then the sole facility for conservation of vultures in the country, has come a long way in the past two decades. At present there are nine Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres (VCBC) in India, of which three are directly administered by Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

Thriving population

“The total number of vultures in these VCBCs is more than 700,” said Sachin Ranade, assistant director, BNHS. Mr. Ranade said that the three species of vultures bred in the VCBC are the White-backed, Long-billed and the Slender-billed vulture.

“By the time we started these vulture conservation breeding centers in 2004, the vulture population had already crashed significantly, almost by 99 %. As vultures are slow-breeding birds, intervention was of immediate requirement otherwise the vultures would have become extinct,” said Vibhu Prakash, deputy director at BNHS.

The major reason behind the vulture population getting nearly wiped out was the drug Diclofenac, found in the carcass of cattle the vultures fed on. The drug, whose veterinary use was banned in 2008, was commonly administered to cattle to treat inflammation.

Dr. Prakash said that the objective of the VCBCs was not only to look after the vultures and breed them in captivity, but also to release them into the wild. The first objective of the VCBC was to produce a few hundred pairs of each of the three species of the endangered vultures.

Referring to the release of two Himalayan Griffon into the wild from the Pinjore VCBC in 2016, the scientists said that the objective of the test release was to see what happens when a species is kept in captivity for a long time and then set free.

Self-reliant in 40 days

He further added that for almost a month after their release, the vultures stayed around the centre, and within a month were flying well. “They joined other vultures and by 40 days they had started locating their own food and water, and soon they flew away. Unfortunately in those days we only had wing tags, so we lost track of the vultures,” he said.

Enthused by the success of the release of the pair, scientists at BNHS are now planning more releases. Mr. Ranade said they are planning a release of more Himalayan Griffons at the Rajabhatkhawa Centre in Bengal later this year. Two of the birds will have satellite PTT (platform transmitting terminals) attached to them, and the rest will have wing tags and rings. The White-backed vultures from Pinjore are scheduled to be released next year.

“If after releasing the birds we don't find any drug-related mortality in the next one year, then we will release 20 more White-backed vultures and we will take 10 Long-billed vultures to Madhya Pradesh ,” the scientist said.

Subscribe before price increase to get unlimited access at just Rs.12 per week.

Already a subscriber? [Sign in](#)

Already a subscriber? [Sign in](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading our articles without intrusion from advertisements.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper or Android, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience on the website.

Support The Hindu's new online experience with zero ads.

Already a user? [Sign In](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com