

Vultures: heroes of the ecosystem - International Vulture Awareness Day Celebration at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu, India

International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) is celebrated every first Saturday of September to create awareness on vulture conservation across the world. IVAD was observed on 05 September 2020 by the Department of Zoology & Wildlife Biology, Government Arts College, Udhamandalam in collaboration with 'Arulagam' at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Masinagudi Division (MTR, MD).

A wall painting with a slogan on "Vultures - Heroes of the Ecosystem" was drawn on the wall of the forest check post building at Vazhaithottam. This wall painting was opened to the public by Mr. L.C.S. Srikanth, deputy director, MTR, MD. After inaugurating the wall painting, he said that the Segur forest range is an important breeding area for White-rumped Vultures and hence the awareness board was erected last year and this year a wall painting has been



Wall Painting inauguration.



T-shirt distribution to anti-poaching watchers.

drawn to sensitize the people before they enter the forest range. B. Ramakrishnan (second author), during his talk highlighted the importance of monitoring vulture populations and

breeding aspects of White-rumped and Long-billed Vultures. He further stated that the populations of these two vulture species are steadily increasing and the methodology to



Goshala visit by team of members.

ascertain vulture population has been finalized to carry out synchronized vulture population estimation in this year for entire south India with the active participation of the Vulture Conservation Working Groups.

Bharathidasan, Secretary of the Arulagam told that once predominantly seen vulture population is now confined only in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. He further emphasized that local people should feel proud of vultures' presence in their vicinity.

Manigandan, research scholar conveyed the people's perceptions on vulture conservation and prevalence of Non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID) in the landscape. Mr. S. Murali, forest range

officer (FRO) at Segur Forest Range, distributed T-shirts with vulture icons to anti-poaching watchers, those who are working in vulture presence forest beats. Mr. N. Mariyappan, FRO, Masinagudi Forest Range and Mr. S. Kaanthan, FRO, Singara Forest Range gave presentations highlighting vulture conservation. After the wall painting inauguration, the team headed by Mr. S. Murali, FRO, Segur Forest Range visited the Goshala run by the Nilgiri Animal Welfare Society of the Nilgiris District at Mavanalla.

Mrs. I. Nisha, Manager of the Goshala explained the administration and medical aspects of cattle in the Goshala. She also stated that on an average 150 cows are being managed on the

farm and 2–3 cattle die every month. She also ensured that the cattle in the Goshala are not treated by diclofenac, ketoprofen, aceclofenac, flunixin, and nimesulide that are harmful to vultures. The Goshala management is willing to provide dead cattle carcasses for vultures to feed. We hope it will materialize soon and Arulagam will take care of all logistics support to facilitate the cattle carcasses to vultures from the Goshala.

The event was well organized by the staff of the Segur Forest Range, MTR, MD.

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