

International Vulture Awareness Day 1st September 2012

International Vulture Awareness Day IVAD was celebrated in South Asia by a number of zoos and breeding centres which feature vultures. Zoo Outreach Organisation contacted all the vulture holding institutions informing them of International Vulture Awareness Day, an event we wrote about in the August issue, and sending the entire "kit" from the IVAD founders and referring them to the internet site. ZOO also created a South Asia appropriate packet for institutions holding these beleaguered birds to use in conducting programmes for visitors and/or students.

The Central Zoo Authority had just featured one of the IUCN Red List Critically Endangered vulture species on the cover of its newsletter. CZA supports the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme to breed this species of vulture at the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre at Pinjore in Haryana.



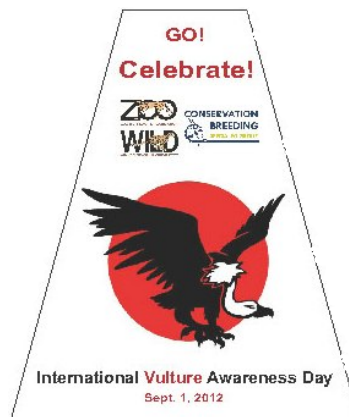
Rengaswamy Marimuthu, ZOO Education Officer coordinated the event by sending invitations and encouraging organisers. There were 25 invited institutions in the region that took advantage of the offer of free packets and conducted programmes which are featured in the following pages of this issue. Packets were the usual model of ZOO with booklet, flash cards, placard, stickers, etc. The following pages will reflect the sincerity and enthusiasm these vulture centres took Vulture Day. Best of all we printed many additional packets which are being offered to Indian zoos to use to run a vulture education session during India's Wildlife Week, 1-7 October 2012.

A new version of our vulture booklet to update recent news of vultures is also included. Vultures have had their habitat and thus their culture taken away from them. No wonder they go into "vulture shock".

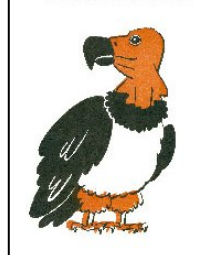


Placard and Flash Cards are very popular with teachers and student alike because they provide an activity. Usually after the programme, teachers lead the kids on a march into public areas to promote the conservation of vultures. Participants wave the placard and chant slogans.

Stickers are also popular with students who collect them to put on the school lockers and books.



Indian Vulture Venture
... Flash cards !



A particularly attractive sticker by TN Forest Dept. for Vulture Awareness Day.



List of institutions celebrating Vulture Awareness Day with help from ZOO and AVAD.

From India:

1. Indira Gandhi Park Zoo, Rourkela, Orissa
2. Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam, AP
3. University of Kota, Rajasthan
4. National Zoological Park, New Delhi
5. Savitri Sikha Nikaten, Rajasthan
6. VOC Park Mini Zoo, Coimbatore, TN
7. C.S.I. St. Thomas Matriculation School, Chennai
8. CEE, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
9. Sepahijala Zoo, Tripura
10. Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Trichy, TN
11. Samariah St. Johns H.S.S. Tisaiyanvilai, TN
12. University of Lucknow, UP
13. Kishor Malekar, Maharashtra
14. Dr. Ramakrishnan, Ooty, TN
15. Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal, MP
16. Sakkarbaug Zoo, Gujarat
17. Mysore Zoo, Karnataka
18. NBNP, Coimbatore, TN
19. Adayar Eco Park, Chennai, TN

Other South Asian Countries:

20. Arunima Higher Sec. School, Nepal
21. Central Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal
22. Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh
23. Chittagong Zoo, Bangladesh
24. Bangladesh Forest Department
25. Lahore Zoo, Pakistan



Indira Gandhi Park Zoo, Rourkela, Odhisha

Zoo education programme is one of the programmes undertaken by Horticulture Department, Rourkela steel plant, Rourkela. School students from different schools were invited to the Indira Gandhi Park Zoo to spread the awareness among them towards the issues related to biodiversity conservation and threats. The international vulture awareness day was celebrated by the Horticulture department on 1st September, 2012 at Indira Gandhi Park Zoo, SAIL, Rourkela steel Plant.

To mark the occasion, students of Gyanajyoti Public School, Sector – 19, Rourkela participated. Thirty five students belonging to class VII and VIII took part along with two teachers in the celebration. The celebration of International Vulture Awareness Day started at 10:45 am on 1st September, 2012 at Indira Gandhi Park Zoo. Sri H. Mishra, Assistant General Manager welcomed the gathering with his inspiring speech. He also emphasized the role of zoo education on conservation of the species.

The session was followed by the inaugural speech of Dr. A. Biswas, Sr. Veterinary Officer and in-Charge (ZDP). He addressed about the threats to the vulture population with reference to the veterinary use of Diclofenac sodium as pain killer. He also spoke about the effect of the medicine on physiology of vultures. Mr. S. Mishra, Curator, Indira Gandhi Park Zoo and Deer Park, carried forward the programme with an interactive way. He spoke about the diversity of the vulture species of world, India and Odisha. He also highlighted the other causes of threat to the vulture population like habitat destruction and scarcity of the food availability. Students were enlightened about conservation programmes carried out by Government and NGO's. Students also learnt about Conservation Breeding Programmes in Indian Zoos and Rescue centers.

The programme went on with the education materials supplied by the Zoo Outreach Organisation specifically on International Vulture Awareness Day celebration. Students read the short poems regarding each Indian vulture species. There was a short



Students briefed about vultures and its conservation by the resource persons



The wards with placard and vulture booklet

play with the vulture information cards. One volunteer had to show the card and the others need to tell the name of the vulture without seeing the backside text of the card. They also tied the 'rakhi' to their friends especially designed for the International Vulture Awareness Day. The students extended their hands towards the conservation of the vulture with the flash card provided in the education kit. Besides, a poem, written in Odia



(regional language of Odisha) on vultures was read by the students. The celebration of International Vulture Awareness Day came to an end with the Vote of Thanks by Sri V.K. Garg, Assistant Manager, Horticulture Department, SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant.

The students had an exposure visit in the zoo and toy train ride in a cheerful mood with a successful completion of the celebration of the International Vulture Awareness Day – 2012.

Submitted by Satyanarayan Mishra, Curator, Indira Gandhi Park Zoo, Rourkela.
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Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam, AP

As part of the educational activities being conducted at the zoo, the "International Vulture Awareness Day" was celebrated on September 1st 2012. The zoo has Scavenger / Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* housed in the Birds of Prey enclosure. About 40 students from different schools were invited to participate in the awareness programme. It started off with an interactive session at the vulture enclosure. The resource persons briefed the students about some fascinating facts about the vultures and also encouraged the students to watch their behaviour in captivity. The Deputy Conservator of Forests and Zoo Curator. Sri G. Ramalingam was the chief guest of the programme. He also interacted with the students and shared useful information at the vulture enclosure. Later, they took out a rally from vulture enclosure to the zoo education centre by tying the wrist bands and displaying the placards in the educational kits provided by Zoo Outreach Organization.

The students watched a thought-provoking documentary on Vulture Conservation in India. Later, power point presentation emphasizing different species of vultures, their distribution, ecological importance and conservation status was given in an attempt to imbibe useful information to the students about these endangered creatures in an interactive manner. Later activity to identify and colour the different species of vultures in India was carried out using the flash cards



Vulture conservation rally conducted at the zoo by carrying placard



Participants were briefed about vultures in front of zoo's vulture enclosure

programme. The response from the participants was overwhelming and all of them performed very well in the competitions. The event ended with prize distribution and closing speech by the zoo curator. Participation certificates were also distributed to all

entertaining as well as informative.

Acknowledgement: We remain thankful to Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore, Wildlife Information Liaison Development and Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for providing valuable resource materials in the form of educational kits. **Submitted by K.L.N Murthy, Biologist, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam.**
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provided in the educational kits. Students took an active role in the interactive sessions by asking various queries on vultures to the resource persons. Competitions like quiz and elocution were conducted to test what they have learnt from the awareness

the students involved. The participants thoroughly enjoyed the programme and successfully integrated facts about vultures through their performances in various activities and competitions conducted by the zoo authorities. Thus, the entire programme has been



University of Kota, Rajasthan, Workshop on Vultures

Opening Session: Workshop on International Vulture Awareness Day was organized by Department of Wildlife Science, University of Kota, Rajasthan in collaboration with Department of Science and Technology (DST), Regional Office, Kota, Rajasthan and Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. This two day workshop was organized to enhance the knowledge about vultures among all related stake holders like students, faculty members, members of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), delegates from other institutions, forest and wildlife officers.

The Chief Guest of the workshop was Honorable Vice-chancellor, Prof. Madhusudan Sharma, University of Kota, Rajasthan, Guest of honour was Mr. Anurag Bhardwaj, CCF, Wildlife Division, Kota, Rajasthan. Mr. G.L. Garg, Director, DST. The convener of the workshop was Mrs. Dr. Fatima Sultana, Course-coordinator, Department of Wildlife Science.

The inaugural session started with enlightening of lamp by Mr. G.L. Garg, Director, DST, Kota welcomed the gathering and delegates from different institution, students and NGOs.

Dr. Krishnendra Nama gave an introductory presentation about the Biodiversity of Kota. In his presentation, Dr. Nama presented the threats and opportunities of biodiversity of this region. He also emphasized the role of communities, Forest department and all related stakeholders to conserve the biodiversity in and around Kota.

Vulture kits provided by Zoo Outreach Organization were displayed jointly by the Chief Guest, guest of honor, guests, convener of the workshop and organizing secretary.

Mr. Anurag Bhardwaj in his speech promised to establish a vulture rescue centre in Kota Zoo.

The Vice-chancellor Prof. Madhusudan Sharma said, "Wildlife Department is the most vibrant and dynamic dept. in the University. He also informed that State Government is ready to establish Wildlife Research Institute (WRI) under



Chief Guest and other dignitaries at the vulture workshop



Participants colouring the vulture flash cards

this University and proposal has been sent to Central Government for approval. He in his speech also added conservation of native species is more beneficial than introduction of any kind of species".

The wildlife students who devoted themselves for wildlife conservation and management in one way or other were awarded with prizes by Honourable Vice chancellor.

Technical Session: This session started with the presentation of Dr. Anil Kumar Chhangani, Associate Professor, MGS University, Bikaner. Dr. Chhangani in his presentation "Present vulture's population dynamics in Rajasthan" informed the current vulture population in Rajasthan. He

not only spoke about vultures but also about cattle rearing trend, culture



Wildlife students with vulture kits



Dr. Anil Chhangani interacting with students during field trip at vulture site

associated with vultures and their rescue techniques and methods. Dr. Chhangani during his presentation said, "The vulture breeding populations were observed in an area with safe nesting and roosting trees and cliffs, especially in and around the protected areas like national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, temples, sacred groves, archeological monuments, forts, old buildings, etc. A total of 6489 vultures of seven different species were observed in 24 districts in different parts of Rajasthan. During this study we rescued over 100 vultures including Long-billed and White-backed vultures in collaboration with the State Forest and Veterinary Departments, NGO's and volunteers from different parts of Rajasthan. These rescued vultures were kept in Zoos of the respective area".

Dr. Chhangani thanked Mrs. Dr. Fatima Sultana, convener of the workshop and all students of Department of Wildlife Science for organizing this workshop and also thanked to DST, Kota and Zoo Outreach Organization for sponsoring this event.

Next technical presentation was by Dr. Pratap Singh Kataria, Associate Professor, Government Dungar College, Bikaner. Dr. Kataria presented "Vultures of Thar Desert". Dr. Kataria gave clue to identify the species and spoke about management and threats of carcass dumping sites to vultures. He also informed rescue techniques and care operations before releasing the rescued vultures in their natural habitat.

After, technical session students were given to complete their tasks as per the vulture kit. Students coloured the vulture flash cards to their original colour and made use of the knowledge from the contents mentioned in the Kit.

At the end of session, Mrs. Dr. Fatima Sultana addressed the gathering about the importance and role of scavenging vultures for ecosystem balance and also expressed her vote of thanks to all invitees from different institutions whose august presence lead to completion of the workshop.

Field Visit to Vulture site (Geparnath): All wildlife students of Department of wildlife Science, faculty

members, and members from different NGOs with both experts of technical session reached Geparnath area at 6:00 hrs on 02 Sep' 12 to observe the sun basking of vultures.

Dr. Chhangani during field visit informed the nesting pattern and nest type of vulture i.e. saucer type nest. He during his orientation with students said Geparnath area is safest breeding site for Long billed vultures in Asia where he had passed his time in vulture study for more than 12 years. He also informed vultures use locally available sticks for making their nests and their nest size diameter is 2-3 feet. And a single nest consists of 2000-4000 sticks.

Dr. Kataria informed it is hard to differentiate between juvenile of white backed vultures and adult long billed vultures. He also added vultures eat 1-2kg of flesh as routine diet but can store same amount of food.

Both the experts taught students about the counting techniques of vultures, rescue methods and thrust areas of the study to motivate students to carry out their studies in vultures.

Submitted by Fatima Sultana, University of Kota, Rajasthan. drfatimaehh2009@gmail.com



Vultures at Geparnath, one of the safest breeding site

National Zoological Park, New Delhi

International Vulture Awareness Day was celebrated in National Zoological Park on 1 September 2012. A group of 42 students from the Progress Public School, New Delhi attended. The programme was started at 9:00 am. Before the programme, all the students went around the zoo and then came to the Education Center. Introduction of International Vulture Awareness Day was given by Mr. Riaz Ahmad Khan (Curator Education). Followed to this, Mr. Amitabh Agnihotri, Director, introduced the event and talked about vultures and its conservation.

Then a presentation on vultures (introductory area of vulture, causes of extinct, relation with human community etc) was given by Mr. Saurabh Vashisth, Education Assistant. A movie on vultures also shown to the students. Then vulture shock kits was distributed to the students and the following activities were played: taking oath to save vultures / Rakhi tying / poem competition and vulture cards colored by the students.

The event was covered by media and the children enjoyed all the activities and the teachers appreciated the efforts saying that the programme was not only interesting but also information given helped to orient the children to the right directions.

We would like to thank Zoo Outreach Organization and Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for providing such informative packages that are highly applauded by the masses and are proving to be a boon for the wildlife conservation.

Poem written by a student:

*Vulture Vulture are you our friend
by your eco-friendly and good nature
you are not bad, useful for us
Clean our jungles by eating dead creature
Oh! my friend, you are in Danger
With no more jungles
Need to save you
if we have to save nature.*

**Submitted by Riaz Ahmad Khan,
Curator Education & Mr. Saurabh
Vashisth, Education Assistant.
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Tying vulture rakhi and taking oath to save vultures



The kids coloured the vulture cards and it displayed in zoo bulletin board



The Zoo team with the students and teachers

Savitri Sikha Nikaten and Save Vulture Community, Bikaner, Rajasthan

On 1 September 2012 we organized a one day Advocacy programme for 11-12 standard biology students at Savitri Sikha Nikaten, Bikaner, Rajasthan. This event was organized in collaboration with Save Vulture Community and Zoo Outreach Organisation. A total of 70 students attended. The school principal and local drug distributors also attended.

The students were told about the Jorbeer area which is a prominent city of Thar Desert, having all the traits of being known as 'The capital of Desert'. The Jorbeer region is spread over an area of 20-25 km. The city has a vulture link and its nearby desert villages are well known for avian fauna mostly for *Gyps* vulture species in winter and for other birds throughout the year. Besides residence vultures, many migratory vultures start arriving here during September and return back to their original place by February and March. In the last 7 years vulture population has been increasing in Jorbeer dead animal dumping site.



Savitri Sikha Nikaten students with vulture kits

The current vulture population of this area is 3500. All 5 species of vultures (Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), Red Headed Vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*), Indian Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), Himalayan Griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*) and Cinereous Vulture (*Aegyptius monachus*) are found here. After this

the students were introduced ZOO's vulture kits and explained them in detail. They tied rakhi, went through the booklet and flash cards. They carried a placard and took a oath to save vulture species in their area.

Submitted by Dau Lal Bohara, Bikaner, Rajasthan.
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Sepahijala Zoological Park, Tripura

During IVAD 2012, we conducted a discussion session on need for vulture conservation at Bishalgarh H.S.School where about 500 students were participated along with 24 teachers. Sri Sankar Saha, teacher of the School delivered a lecture highlighting need for vulture conservation.

I gave a power point presentation along with delivering lecture on the need of conducting more awareness programme on vulture conservation whose numbers are declining rapidly. Thereafter a quiz competition on wildlife specially on conservation of vulture was organized and four schools namely (1) Bishalgarh H.S.School (2) Vivekananda Sishunekatan, Bishalgarh (3) Baidhyardighi H.S School and Charilam H.S School participated.

At the end the materials received from the Zoo Outreach Organization was used and distributed among students and teachers.



The organiser, school students and teachers with ZOO's vulture kits



Four schools of Bishalgarh participating in vulture quiz competition

Submitted by Ajit Kumar Bhowmik, Director, Sepahijala Zoological Park, Tripura. Email: bhowmik_ak@yahoo.com

**Arunima Higher Sec. School,
Kathmandu, Nepal**

September 1st turned out to be a special day at Arunima Higher Sec. School, Nepal. As 1st September is celebrated as the International Vulture Awareness Day, with respect to this schedule, the Friends of Zoo members of Arunima Higher Secondary School decided to dedicate a week for conducting awareness on school students regarding Vulture. Respective FOZ members participated in an Essay writing competition on the topic "Importance of Vulture for Ecology" on Friday, 31st August. Similarly, executive members of FOZ club also involved themselves in preparing a wall magazine with the intention to bring positive change attitude of students regarding vulture. This magazine was based on the information gathered from various sources By FOZ members. These programs contributed in increasing the sincerity of students regarding the conservation of rare animals like vulture. It was found that students shared their views about vulture through essays and wall magazine. Similarly these programs provided students an opportunity to get attached to such a concept apart from their curriculum. Likewise, we, the executive members of FOZ club enhanced our ability to work in team and took a step ahead in vulture conservation. **Submitted by Arunima Higher Secondary School Kathmandu, Nepal**

Central Zoo, Nepal

Central Zoo celebrated the International Vulture Awareness Day on 1st September, 2012 to create awareness about vanishing vultures. On the occasion various programs were organized among zoo visitors and Friends of Zoo (FOZ) members. More than 200 FOZ members from different schools participated in the program, which comprises of presentation along



Holding vulture posters and chanting slogans for vulture conservation



Vulture poster made by the students

with the talk program on Vultures. FOZ members took out a rally around the Zoo holding display cards and chanting slogans for vulture conservation. Likewise colouring and painting were done by FOZ members. To create awareness about vultures talk program was also delivered among visitors in front of the vulture enclosure. Similarly the talk program

was organized by Little Angels FOZ eco club in the school where students delivered a presentation to their fellow students about the vulture awareness and the need to conserve it. **Submitted by Rachna Shah, Conservation Education Officer, NTNC-Central Zoo, Nepal. rachanasayshi@yahoo.com**



Students marching in the zoo

VOC Park Mini Zoo, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Zoo Outreach Organisation ZOO celebrated International Vulture Awareness Day on 1 September 2012 at VOC Park Mini Zoo, Coimbatore. Twenty-one students aged between 11-14 of Anupparplayam Corporation High School took part in the programme with their teacher Mr. T. Ambrose. Dr. Asokan, Director of the zoo welcomed them and briefed about the zoo. Following this an education awareness programme on vultures was conducted by R. Marimuthu, Education Officer, ZOO.

They were given detailed information about vanishing vultures and the need to protect them. He started with the meaning of biodiversity, each species unique role in ecosystem in which vultures are part of it. Vultures of the world-new and old world vultures were also explained. A total of 23 old world vultures are found in Africa, Asia and Europe and out of which 9 species are found in India. They are: 1. White backed vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*), 2. Slender billed vultures (*Gyps tenuirostris*), 3. Long billed vultures (*Gyps indicus*), 4. Egyptian vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*), 5. Red headed vultures (*Sarcogyps calvus*), 6. Indian Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), 7. Himalayan Griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*), 8. Cinereous Vultures (*Aegypius monachus*) and 9. Bearded or Lammergeier vultures (*Gypaetus barbatus*). Colour photographs of these species were shown to the students to understand differences in species.

Then general information such as their morphology, distribution and habitat, general behaviour, social behaviour, vocalizations, diet and feeding behaviour, reproduction, longevity, causes of mortality and its conservation status were told. Vultures in human culture explained by giving out few examples. The Egyptians considered the vulture to be an excellent mother. In the Hindu epic Ramayana, Jatayu and his brother Sampaati who had the form of vultures and helped Rama to find out Sita kidnapped by Ravana. In the Tibetan and Parsi practice of sky burial, vultures and other birds eat human corpses.

Then moved on to the ecological significance of vultures and they are



Municipal school students with nine species of Indian vulture posters



Going through the information on the vulture booklets



Exploring vulture flash cards to know about vulture kinds and the poem

the primary removers of carrion in India, scavenging on animals and thereby helping keep the environment clean. The three Indian vultures, White backed vulture, Slender billed vulture, Long billed Vulture are threatened. In the wild it has been declined drastically over the past decade. The decline of these species in India has been put at 97% by 2005. IUCN Redlist put these three species in Critically Endangered category and that is highest category of endangerment. Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972 put this species Schedule I. Vulture decline in India was first documented in 1999. *Diclofenac*, the veterinary drug introduced in late 80's was the main cause of death. Non-Governmental Organisations and Government of India are striving hard to save these species by setting up vulture breeding and conservation centres in several parts of the country. In Nepal and Pakistan also vulture conservation activities are going on.

Subsequent to this, ZOO's vulture kits were distributed to all the students. First of all, VULTURE SHOCK booklet was used. The students were asked to go through page by page and few of them read loudly to other students hear. Then they took the Indian Vulture Venture ...Flash Cards. They explored all the nine species of



ZOO educator presents detailed information about Indian vulture species

vultures, read the information and the poem. They tied the rakhi each other and pledged to save vultures. They were asked to look at the sticker with International vulture Day logo on it. Next they carried the placard and shouting slogans related to conservation of vultures and move around the zoo grounds. The children told that they learned new informations on vultures, which they never know and they will be supportive for

conservation of this species. Zoo Director thanked the students and teacher and also Zoo Outreach Organisation for having the day at the zoo. He also thanked Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for sponsoring vulture education materials. **Submitted by R. Marimuthu, ZOO and Dr. N. Asokan, Director, VOC Park Mini Zoo.**
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Students who participated in the event with their teacher and coordinator

C.S.I. St. Thomas Matriculation School, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Nearly 40 students from St. Thomas Mat. School, Marian Mat. H.S.S., St. Dominic's Anglo Indian H.S.S. and Montfort Mat. H.S.S. Chennai participated in International Vulture Awareness Day 2012 at Thomas Mat. H.S.S. The free educational packets on VULTURE SHOCK were distributed by Mr. Paul Jeyakaran, Rtd. Deputy Registrar, Madurai, M.K. University.

Mrs. Vimala, Principal welcomed the participants. Jessie Jeyakaran gave a brief Introductory talk Mr. Ramjee, The Scientist-in-charge CEE -Tamilnadu briefed about the vultures with the powerpoint presentation. Mrs. Angaline a well talented teacher of Thomas Mat. School trained the students in such a way to give a cultural programme with the vulture masks. There were 4 sessions on threats, the cause of their disappearance, uses and the difference between the New World and the Old World vultures. All were clearly dealt with. Students were divided into groups for colouring and picking up of the vultures of each State.

The day's programme was published in Chennai Times and Deccan Chronicle. And telecasted in Makkal TV. Decentralization and data collections on vultures were assigned to the students. Thanks to ZOO, WILD and Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for the Vulture Shock materials which has made us to wake up and to know more about the vultures. Everyone including the media appreciated the team spirit of Zoo Outreach Organisation.

Submitted by Jessie Jeyakaran.
jesseyjey@rediffmail.com



Students with very creative vulture masks during cultural programme



Posing with vulture education kits



Different vulture masks developed for vulture culture programme



Students looking at the exhibition gallery



Mr. Satheesh DFO giving his inaugural speech



Vulture flash card given to the teachers

Biodiversity Conservation Foundation BCF, Trichy, Tamil Nadu

The dawn of the first Saturday in September every year is recognised as International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD), which will publicize the importance of conservation of vultures & necessary activities to be initiated at specified landscapes. India is home to nine species of vultures, of which four are seen in Tamilnadu. The rapidly declining vulture population is confined only to Sathyamangalam landscape in TamilNadu. Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (BCF), a non-profit organisation (NPO) has worked at Sathyamangalam landscape on the monitoring of vulture population and issues such as impact of poisons on vultures and trade in vulture for the past three years. In support of IVAD in Sathyamangalam Forest Division (SFD), a special vulture awareness programme was organized by BCF in a joint venture with Tamil Nadu Forest Department (TNFD) Sathyamangalam forest division on Sep 1st at Sathyamangalam.

BCF has organised an all-day event at SFD at three different venues including Sathyamangalam town and tribal settlements at Kulithuraipatti and Thengumaragada. BCF has included photo displays, talks, documentary, distribution of awareness booklets, tags, painting cards and placards with an aim to create awareness and stress the importance of conservation of vultures and the impact of ecotoxicological factors and anthropogenic interference which has led to the rapid decline of this species. The programme was primarily organised for students and tribal villagers to inform them about the importance of conservation of vultures at their own habitats.

The DFO of SFD, Mr. Satheesh, IFS who made the inaugural speech on the awareness programme at Sathyamangalam town gave an account on the importance of Sathyamangalam landscape in vulture conservation. The reserve forests of Sathyamangalam being at the confluence of Eastern and Western Ghats hold a crucial position in vulture conservation. It forms a critical wildlife zone as it is the sink habitat of Mudumalai and Bandipur Tiger Reserves, which also ensures a steady food-chain to vultures. He also stated the importance of conservation of vulture at Sathyamangalam, the last stronghold of four old world vultures

viz, White backed, Long billed, Red-headed and Nephron vulture.

Dr. A. Kumaraguru BCF followed a special talk on vulture conservation, who emphasized on the reasons for the rapid decline of vultures and the measures common people has to initiate to conserve vultures in their own landscape. Vultures are of great value as natural scavengers, enabling clean ecosystem devoid of carcass for longer time and halts spread of disease from carcass. High mortality rates of all age groups and abnormally low reproductive success rate was attributed to the extensive use of the NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) *diclofenac* as a veterinary drug. Vultures exposed to the drug through carcasses of livestock that were treated with the drug exhibit signs of illness (neck dropping syndrome) prior to death. The other plausible reasons for the decline are use of pesticides, human disturbance and decline of nesting sites, habitat alteration/ fragmentation, decline of wild ungulates. He also insisted on the cooperation of common people and student's involvement to bring about a complete ban on diclofenac as veterinary drug and in maintaining a non-toxic environment for the survival of an integrated ecosystem.

Mr. Karupaswamy, IPS, Superintendent of Police (SP), Special Task Force (STF), based at Sathyamangalam, who was overwhelmed by this programme, on behalf of his team extended his support to conserve vultures in this landscape. He also suggested us to conduct frequent awareness programs to educate people of Sathyamangalam Forest Division to conserve these critically endangered species before being extinct from this landscape. Members of BCF, Mr. Senthilkumar, Mr. Shanmugamanathan, Mr. Siva Ellanchezhian educated the students through a documentary on vulture and photo displays the diversity of vultures and the importance to conserve these natural scavengers. More than 600 students from various Government and private schools attended the awareness programme conducted at



One of the teachers tying rakhi to his student



TNFD official sharing his experiences on vultures

Sathyamangalam town. Students and teachers appreciated our efforts and expressed their happiness to see pictures/photos of this amazing species, which they can otherwise see only through television shows. Students have acquired a sense of accountability to protect the ecosystem and avoid eco-toxicological habitats of human. Inspired by these enthusiastic students, BCF extended the awareness program to another two tribal villages at Thengumaragada and Kulithuraipatti. BCF has made tribal villagers to understand the ecological importance of vultures as scavengers and created awareness among them on the impact of diclofenac and measures to avoid its use to conserve vulture and their habitat for future generation.

BCF expresses its sincere thanks to TNFD for giving us permission and necessary cooperation for IVAD awareness programme at Sathyamangalam Forest Division. BCF expresses a heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Sabapathy who kindled our interest for this awareness programme. BCF also thanks Zoo Outreach Organisation, IVAD, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, WILD for giving us an opportunity to foster our participation in vulture conservation and for providing us the required information booklets. BCF extends its heartfelt thanks to STF for extending their support for vulture conservation. A special thanks goes to the forest officials of SFD, for their immense help during the programme. We also thank students and Staff members of Saru Matriculation Higher secondary School, Sri Ragavedra Higher Secondary School, Govt Higher Secondary School, Thengumaragada Govt. Middle School, tribal villagers and everyone who have been part of this programme.

Submitted by Dr. Kumaraguru, BCF, Trichy, TN.
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**Samariah St. Johns H.S.School,
Tisaiyanvilai, Tirunelveli, Tamil
Nadu**

CULTURE SHOCK + VULTURE CULTURE = VULTURE SHOCK: International Vulture Awareness Day was celebrated in Samariah St. Johns H.S.S. Tisaiyanvilai, Tirunelveli Dist. in an enjoyable and meaningful manner. Our school correspondent Dr. J.I.P.Rajan welcomed the gathering. Headmaster W. Joel Revingston in his introductory talk said that vultures are an ecologically vital group of birds which are declining drastically in their number and may disappear if we are not aware of that danger. Vulture Awareness Days were run by South Africa and England from 2009, and that is expanded now in to an international event. Vultures act as the sanitation department of the natural world. They are scavengers eating dead animals before they have time to rot and make us sick. Governments of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan agreed to take measures to remove toxic 'Vulture killing' drugs from the environment, including diclofenac (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug for veterinary use) Vultures are not vicious or destructive; very clean birds, intelligent birds, very active, beautiful, very large and heaviest flying bird. We should know about it; spread the sweet truths about it to others and let us all pledge this day to save, conserve and adore this powerful and brilliant fliers with a wingspan of over 2 meters.

The chief guest Mr. Susairajan, Principal of Joan of Arc Community College gave a special talk. Church congregant Edwin, a retired teacher explained in ancient religious traditions how vultures are related to spirituality with references from the BIBLE. (culturally revered bird). School governing board member Mr. Devadoss and Revigston were there on the dais. Students had a discussion about the vultures on the following headings: Uses of vultures to human, virtues of vultures, threats to vulture, reasons for the disappearance of the species (vultures are listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List- The International Union for Conservation of Nature) and why we save vultures?

Nine Indian vulture species, habitats and descriptions were dramatized by the students. A quiz was conducted for the 10th standard student teams which kept the audience excited. Many facts about vultures came to light for the parents, students, teachers and congregation. Writer of our school Samuel Jebakumar listed the



Students who participated in vulture drawing with their pictures



Vulture pictures drawn on the black board and students in drawing competition



Mr. Joel Revingston with students wearing colourful vulture costumes

characteristics of the vulture that has to be inculcated in human beings. Sixty five students participated in the drawing competition, later on the drawings were exhibited in the class room. Teacher Sunder thanked everyone. Students with IVAD placards, rakhi, stickers and slogans - all these kits were supplied by Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore, went on a procession. Felicitation and guidance were received from National Green Corps District co-ordinators Dr. Vijayalakshmi, Dr. Selvin Samuel, Dr. Mohanraj Ebenezer, Gajendra Babu and T.F. Joseph. Media reporters

Murugesan, and Ponselkar were present. A. Alzhagia Nambi announced the programme in All India Radio. Others participated in the programme were: Janarthanan, Sudhaker and Bala Sankar. On the bulletin board the facts about vultures and flashcards were displayed. Evaluation sheets were supplied to 20 students at random to assess the programme.

**Submitted by Joel Revingston,
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Well decorated vulture awareness car flag off by Vice Chancellor and his wife



Students made aware of vulture conservation



People from all walks of life come forward to save vultures

Lucknow University, Uttar Pradesh

On the occasion of International Vulture Awareness Day on 1 September, Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow in collaboration with Zoo Outreach Organisation, Tamil Nadu and U.P. State Biodiversity Board celebrated the Day with various activities. The programme started with flag off of an Vulture Awareness Car at 6:30 am from VC Bungalow by Prof. M.K. Mishra, Vice Chancellor, University of Lucknow and his wife Mrs. Meena Mishra. The vulture awareness car was well decorated with banners, posters, stickers etc. on vulture awareness. At the same time vulture rakhis were tied to Mrs. Meena Mishra, and other faculty members. The car covered areas of Lucknow city like National Botanical Research Institute, Ram Manohar Lohiya Park, Regional Science City, Fun Republic, Waves, Sahara Ganj, Zoo, Charbagh railway station, Aminabad, Chowk, Hazaratganj, and distributed awareness materials on vultures. Total of 6000 pamphlets were distributed among people and various local schools and colleges of Lucknow city. In another event painting competition was also organized along with a display stall at Gate no. 4 of Lucknow University.

The vulture kits by Zoo Outreach Organisation were sent to more than 20 schools of Lucknow along with other educational material. The principals and science teachers were very enthusiast by the awareness material especially the vulture rakhis were very attractive. The programme concluded with the fun-fare with much enthusiasm among youth as well as elders of the city. The programme was lead by Dr. Amita Kanaujia (Dr. Amita Kanaujia is Associate Professor in Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow. She is one of the members of State Vulture Conservation Society, Department of Forest Uttar Pradesh), her Research Scholars (Ms. Sonika Kushwaha, Mr. Akhilesh Kumar and Yasmin Zaidi) as well as volunteers (Mrs. Sheel, Mr. Nafees Alam and Mr. Grijesh). **Submitted by Dr. Amita Kanaujia, Lucknow University. UP. kanaujia.amita@gmail.com**

CEE, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

International Vulture Awareness Day was observed by Centre for Environment Education, CEE Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal with educational material support from Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore. Government Divisional Residential School Katara Hills, Bhopal was selected for the programme as it represents the students from 8 nearby districts of Bhopal from Madhya Pradesh with capacity of 300 students (Boys and Girls) from classes VI-XII std and 25 teachers. This school is in outskirts of the city where vultures population may be seen frequently and students have some sight of this bird. The awareness programme on vulture was first discussed with Shri. S.P. Arjaria, Principal and Ms. Rakhi Vishwakarma, Teacher (TGT-Science). School administration was welcomed and invited CEE to organize the programme. The vulture kit and presentation on vulture provided by ZOO was gone through by Mr. Dilip Chakravarty, Project Officer, CEE and made it simple and linguistic. The programme started with the introduction of participants and an overview of session. The general characteristic of Vultures, their habitat, types of vultures found in India through flash card, food habit and social behaviour was shared with the participants. The cultural and ecological significance of the bird is also informed during the session. Students and teachers were curious to know why the population of this huge bird is declining in recent days. The answer to this question came from the student of class VI Master Liladhar. He responded that the chemical used for livestock for pain relieving is the major threat to vulture population. Later on the chemical Diclofenac and its impact to vultures was explained by the educator. At the end the conservation efforts by MoEF and different organization was also informed to the participants.

To make session more interactive, students from different classes in group of 10 students were invited to play with the learning materials on vultures. Students were happy to receive materials like stickers, flash card, placard, rakhi and booklet on vultures developed by ZOO Outreach Organization. Few kits were also provided to the teachers in order to carry out future programme on this topic. Students also tied rakhi to each other and took pledge to conserve vultures at own level. Students and



Mr. Dilip Chakravarty gives an overview about vultures



Teachers provided with vulture kits to have future programmes on vultures



Enthusiastic students who are having vulture materials

teacher were benefited by this session and encouraged to have more such programme based on species conservation.

**Submitted by Dilip Chakravarty,
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Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal, MP.

RMNH arranged Vulture Awareness Programme to mark the International Vulture Awareness Day. Eighty students of Govt. Navin Higher Secondary School, Area Colony participated. Shri Manik Lal Gupta, Educational Asst. during his presentation informed the students the vulture were one of the biggest birds of India feeding on dead body and found cleaning the environment as 'Scavengers'. Vulture also may prefer fresh meat and they take bathe after each meal which shows their hygienic attitude. He further added that population of vultures are declining due to changes in processing of dead livestock, use of diclofenac as pain killer to cattle, application of pesticides, habitat alteration in breeding areas, forest fire, massive mining etc. Shri M.L. Gupta also informed that they used to collect twigs to build a nest on cliffs or tall trees. They are slow breeders found to lay only one egg in per year leading to their thin population.

Shri Gupta told to students that vultures wait for a mightier scavenger to eat first interestingly to open the carcass. These vultures do not carry food to their young ones in their claws. Bacteria infected food never affect the health of vulture due to its strong acid content of stomach. Shri Gupta elaborated that the dogs, wild dogs, crows, hyenas etc. were the natural competitor of vulture and it has been noticed that vultures were brilliant fliers with a wingspan of well over two meters and could fly for hours without flapping once. He recalled the names of different vultures as White backed, Slender billed, Egyptian, Long billed, Himalayan griffon, Eurasian griffon, Bearded, Black and Red vultures are found in India. During discussion most of the students revealed that they did not notice vulture any where however only fifteen students acknowledged that sighting of only one species.

Shri Gupta made an appeal to the students not to disturb their habitat and nest. Study material received from Zoo Outreach Organisation, Coimbatore was distributed among the students. Shri Amol Adholiya, Teacher and Eco-club incharge, Govt. Navin Higher Secondary School, Arera Colony was also present during the programme. **Submitted by Sethuramalingam, Scientist - E. sethubpl@gmail.com**



Govt. Navin H.S.S. students tying Vulture rakhi



Students rejoicing with Vulture kits



Shri. Manik Lal Gupta presenting a slide show on Vultures