Rescue and Rehabilitation of a Black Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) in Orissa

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Black vulture is one of the near threatened species of the world. So, various conservation activities have been taken up to prevent them from becoming threatened species. However, their population is decreasing rapidly day-by-day. The main threats to black vulture are direct mortality caused by humans (either accidentally or deliberately), decreased availability of food and destruction of habitat. The present paper describes the rescue and rehabilitation of an unknown bird which was later on identified as black vulture and its typical feeding habit.

A black-coloured bird unable to fly was rescued from Bhalupani village area by forest officials of Bonai Forest Division, Orissa and was brought to Nandankanan Zoological Park for necessary treatment and rehabilitation. As the bird was dull and depressed, immediately antistress drug Restobal and Zetress were provided with drinking water.

The bird was identified to be Black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*). It was a very large blackish to blackish brown coloured bird with a light pinkish naked neck and black ruff. Mostly they can be observed alone perched on the ground and rarely in a group of 15 to 20. It usually prefers habitats of open savannah and semi-desert habitat. In India, this type of vulture is usually found in Himalayas, migrating down to south and west (lower latitudes) in winter, occasionally vagrant to peninsular regions of Maharastra (Satara) and Kerala. This is the first sighting record in the State of Orissa.

The fecal sample examination was negative for any parasitic ova. On the first day it was given a dressed chicken and on the next day a live chicken which was refused by the bird. Antistress drug Restobal and Zetress were continued. A trial was made to provide the chicken at a height in a pole so that it will better simulate natural conditions (Houston and Piper, 2006). To our surprise, immediately the bird tore the chicken apart and ate it. However, the birds generally feed on carrion and also on tortoises on the ground. This is the typical habit of eating that we observed in this black kite and we succeeded at our task of feeding the vulture.

Rehabilitated Black Vulture at Nandankanan Zoological Park

Since then, the bird has been kept in Nandankanan Zoological Park as an exhibit, has been provided food in this manner and is in good condition at the time of writing this report.

Reference

Houston, D.C. & S.E. Piper (eds). 2006. Proceedings of the International Conference on Conservation and Management of Vulture Populations. 14-16 November 2005, Thessaloniki, Greece. Natural History Museum of Crete & WWF Greece. 176 pages.

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