

Assessing the Survival Threats and Conservation Strategies for Asian King Vulture (Jatayu) Populations in Uttar Pradesh

Dr. Sunita Rawat¹ & Dr. Vineeta Rawat²

¹Assistant Professor Zoology, Government Degree College Gosai kheda, Unnao, UP

²Assistant Professor Zoology, Siddharth University Kapilvastu, Siddharth Nagar, UP

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Abstract

In Uttar Pradesh, some grim risks remain to sustain the Asian king vulture, *Gyps bengalensis*. The major challenges to vulture conservation include lack of adequate financiers and resources, inadequate legislative cover and enforcement, and last but not least socioeconomic factors, all of which are reviewed in detail in this chapter. The number of vultures is still deficient, and poor funding complicates the possibility of accepting useful protection measures. Unfortunately, weak enforcement of the current legislation and the need for policy updates only worsen the situation. Soft self-organization brings a conflict between human beings and the environment. Humans and the use of natural resources are in conflict where humans face social and economic hindrances in tracking conservation programs. In light of these difficulties, the article suggests the following solutions: husbandry techniques for both in-situ and ex-situ conservation; enhancement of stringent policies and their implementation; improved research and data acquisition; and other approaches such as ecotourism and other forms of sustainable income-generating activities. In addition to promoting balance in the biosphere, these are related to cultural traditions and public hygiene, thus the Asian King Vulture has to be saved. Vulture populations that can benefit from a healthy environment in the state of Uttar Pradesh in the future and the importance of the combined effort are illustrated in the paper. The future of these conservation initiatives will therefore hinge on the synergy that will exist between communities, non-governmental organizations, government, and international organizations.

Keywords- Asian King Vulture, Conservation Strategies, Policy Enforcement, Socioeconomic Factors, Sustainable Livelihoods, Integrated Approaches.

Introduction

Unfortunately, the range population of the Asian King Vulture scientifically named *Gyps bengalensis* has been declining at a shocking alarming rate although this decline has attained a crisis level in Uttar Pradesh in India (Cuthbert et al. 2016). A drastic decrease in these numbers seems to stem from anthropogenic factors such as habitat loss, veterinary drug poisoning, infrastructural collisions, and socioeconomic woes of populations that inhabit the regions (Botha et al. 2012). Besides the requirement for human health and cultural heritage, special concern in preserving the vulture could be effective in balancing the global ecosystem (Prakash et al. 2012). To prevent the extinction of the Asian King vulture in the region of Uttar Pradesh, this paper assesses all the issues that have come up and provides a way forward.

1 Challenges in Conservation Efforts

1.1 Limited Funding and Resources

Having such a limited budget and funds there is no easy way to conserve the Asian King Vulture in Uttar Pradesh. Measures such as habitat protection, environmental enforcement, and community involvement,

require significant capital investment (Cuthbert et al. 2016). Difficulty in finding comprehensive conservation measures is evident; enhanced funding constraints prevent a quick response to emergent threats ((UNEP) 2019).

Maintaining conservation initiatives over the long run can be difficult when funding comes from unpredictable sources like grants and donations ((WWF) 2021). In order to successfully preserve vulture populations and their habitats in Uttar Pradesh, it is essential to address these financial constraints.

1.2 Policy and Enforcement Gaps

Even though conservation measures like the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 were established in India, conservation program is severely hindered by ineffective enforcement methods (India 1972). Persistent dangers from illicit hunting and the use of toxic veterinary medications like diclofenac are exacerbated by inadequate patrolling, an absence of qualified staff, and a lack of judicial follow-through (Cuthbert et al. 2016). Vulture populations are constantly at risk because of the criminal operations in their habitat, caused by the lack of actual enforcement of laws.

The present gaps in vulture protection must be immediately filled by legislative changes (Oldekop et al. 2016). In addition, authorities have to encourage the use of vulture-safe veterinary medications and sustainable farming methods that lessen reliance on harmful chemicals. (Prakash et al. 2012). Conservation frameworks can be made more resilient and flexible through collaborative policy-making that includes government, NGOs, and local communities (Nature (IUCN) 2020).

2.3. Socioeconomic Factors

2.3.1. Balancing Human Development and Conservation

Striking a balance between human growth and conservation initiatives is a complicated task that Uttar Pradesh must confront. Loss and degradation of habitats brought about by rapid urbanization have a direct effect on vulture numbers (Biggs et al. 2011).

Civil works, for instance, road construction and electricity line stringing expose animals to higher risks of death by electrocution and compromise the connectivity of ecological landscapes (Naidoo et al. 2018). Any long-term strategy for vulture conservation therefore must seek to strike a balance between the need to protect the vultures and the welfare and other needs of the human society.

2.3.2. Addressing Poverty and Reliance on Natural Resources

The conservation of vultures is an issue rich with challenges, and the socioeconomic issues of the populations in question further worsen the condition. This state reduces food security and increases deforestation and uncontrolled hunting as poorer individuals who rely on wildlife to support themselves are partly and partially responsible for vulture endangerment (Botha et al. 2012). To offset this pressure, community participation in conservation can be achieved through awareness, empowered livelihood ventures as well as conservation incentives (Oldekop et al. 2016).

3. Recommendations for Future Actions

3.1 Integrated Conservation Approaches

3.1.1 Combining In-Situ and Ex-Situ Strategies

Implementing both in-situ and ex-situ measures is required to conserve the Asian King Vulture more effectively in Uttar Pradesh (Cuthbert et al. 2016). In-situ conservation therefore involves protecting the areas where vultures are most suitable for breeding, feeding, sheltering, and nesting (Bowden 2009). This category includes activities such as creating a protected area for a species that just experienced a human-induced calamity like drought, flood, or fire, hunting or capturing the animals or birds that are in danger of extinction, planting trees, and rehabilitation of vegetation among others (Prakash et al. 2012).

Vulture health is maintained through ex-situ conservation measures such as sanctuaries and captive breeding centers even when those are pulled out from their natural habitats. In this sense, such programs decrease the risks with which specific species could be wiped out due to calamities thus keeping these species as genetic reserves (Nature (IUCN) 2020). However, it is worth recognizing that both approaches should be used together to overcome the longer effects of human-vulture conflict. Thus, combining effective in-situ and ex-situ measures should be preferred for a more substantial and extended vulture population (Oldekop et al. 2016).

3.1.2. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

This paper argues that it is impossible to avoid the involvement of all stakeholders including government agencies, NGOs at local and international levels, and the local communities for conservation work ((WWF) 2021). It is mandatory to realize the increased depth and effectiveness of conservation activities through the collaboration of efforts and information (International 2021). It has been demonstrated that efforts that are closer to culture and pocket-friendly are best implemented by the local people thereby making people proud that they can protect their neighborhood (Cuthbert et al. 2016).

3.2 Strengthening Legislation and Enforcement

3.2.1. Policy Advocacy

In this case, it is imperative to call for policy improvements regarding laws that protect vultures (India 1972). Contemporary problems like habitat fragmentation, climate change, and vulture-toxic veterinary drugs should be at the center of lobbying for change in existing standards (Prakash et al. 2012). The majority of the people, as well as the stakeholders and lawmakers, should work hand in hand to ensure that everyone is on the same paradigm to enhance the formulation of legislation (Cuthbert et al. 2016).

3.2.2. Capacity Building for Law Enforcement Agencies

In particular, improving the competencies of particular law enforcement authorities is important for the success of the implementation of conservation legislation (Cuthbert et al. 2016). The main things wildlife officers could be trained include ways of tracking, approaches to use in enforcing the laws, and aspects of the law concerning wildlife conservation (India 1972). The features stated above could be helpful to enhance the capacities of these authorities concerning crime prevention and criminal reaction through the provision of some assistance such as fast response teams and surveillance equipment (Cuthbert et al. 2016).

3.3 Enhancing Research and Data Collection

3.3.1 Long-Term Ecological Studies

To understand the trends in the abundance of vultures and what leads to their decline it is essential to carry out long-term ecological monitoring. Such research can open up things like migration patterns, breeding patterns, habitats, and causes of death (Cuthbert et al. 2016). For proposing adaptive management strategies,

it is appropriate to collect information that can assist in identifying trends and assessing action taken towards conserving the species (Nature (IUCN) 2020).

It is recommended for researchers to collaborate with universities and with other groups that are involved in ecological studies, in this way the studies can be sure that they have the correct methodology and the studies are going to be quite extensive (Oldekop et al. 2016).

3.3.2 Citizen Science Initiatives

By engaging the public in research through data collection and monitoring, the expansion of scientific coverage can be achieved (Biggs et al. 2011). Knowledge collected from people in the area, bird enthusiasts, and volunteers can prove extremely beneficial in locating the presence of vultures, nest sites, and changes in population data, (Cuthbert et al. 2016). Besides supporting research on scientific development, these measures foster public participation in the action against wildlife protection (Oldekop et al. 2016).

The citizen-generated data could be collected, sorted, and analyzed with the help of internet platforms and mobile applications to ensure its quality (International 2021). To reduce data drift and increase the participation level of the people, they must be empowered through training and tools (Cuthbert et al. 2016).

3.4 Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods

3.4.1 Eco-Tourism Opportunities

It will be argued locally that more diverse income sources coupled with increased environmental awareness can be fostered in the communities in the course of vulture tourism (Biggs et al. 2011). In a way, Ecotourism may reduce the demands for destructive practices, fund conservation programs, and provide the motive to protect the environment ((WWF) 2021).

Maintenance of Bird-watching sites, bird-watching guided tours, and education centers will be favorable for tourists and residents (Cuthbert et al. 2016). When eco-tourism programs partner with tourism firms or embark on digital marketing, more people will be reached to these sites ((UNEP) 2019).

3.4.2 Alternative Income Sources for Local Communities

The engagement of local communities in other income-generating sources will have demanding effects on vultures' populations (Botha et al. 2012). Some of the tourism programs that are economically viable and do not affect the environment are; balanced and sustainable agriculture, tourism through handicraft and other cottage industries, and other small business ventures (Oldekop et al. 2016).

Individuals might be empowered through training programs to explore alternative economic pursuits that promote skill development and entrepreneurship (Cuthbert et al. 2016).

4 Conclusion

Preserving cultural heritage and ecological equilibrium in Uttar Pradesh are both impacted by the plight of the Asian King Vulture. Scavengers like vultures are essential to ecosystems because they quickly and effectively dispose of dead animals, which helps keep illnesses at bay (Cuthbert et al. 2016). Their existence reflects the robustness of food webs and the general state of the environment, both of which are signs of a balanced ecosystem (Prakash et al. 2012).

Vultures represent chastity and longevity, two concepts that are highly esteemed in many cultures. The dwindling numbers of these magnificent birds have serious ramifications for the long-held beliefs and customs that surround them. (Oldekop et al. 2016). In this way, protecting vulture populations keeps the region's cultural and environmental traditions alive and well for centuries to come (Biggs et al. 2011). The Asian King Vulture plays an important role in preserving cultural and ecological diversity. By resolving present issues and adopting the suggested measures, the conservation of Vultures can be ensured in Uttar Pradesh.

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