LONG-BILLED VULTURES

Additional new breeding site of Long-billed vultures (*Gyps indicus*) in Moyar Valley, Tamil Nadu, Southern India

The Long-billed vulture *Gyps indicus* is one of the three native, resident *Gyps* species in India. Long-billed vulture breeds in south-east Pakistan and Peninsular India south of the Gangetic plan, north to Delhi, east through Madhya Pradesh, south to Nilgiris (Collar et al., 2001; Risebrough 2004; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; Venkitachalam & Senthilnathan 2015). The species is classified as Critically Endangered (BirdLife International, 2017) because of catastrophic decline of 90-98% in the population of *Gyps* species due to diclofenac poisoning (Gilbert et al., 2006; Green et al., 2004). Long-billed vultures nest almost exclusively in colonies on cliffs and ruins, although in areas, where cliffs are absent, they have been recorded nesting in trees in Kolayat Tehsil of Bikaner, Rajasthan. (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; Khatri, 2015). Here we present
an additional new breeding site record for Long-billed vultures in Moyar valley, Tamil Nadu, Southern India.

The Moyar Valley is located between 11.70° N, 76.59°E and 11.47°N, 77.14°E. The Nilgiri plateau is to its southeast, Thalamalai plateau to the northeast, and Mudumalai Tiger Reserve to the west. The approximate length of the valley is 50 km falling within the TN and Karnataka states. The distinctiveness of the landscape is the connection with the Western and Eastern Ghats, considered as the Global Biosphere Hotspot of the world. Elevation of the area ranges from 209 to 1950 m.

Long-billed vulture nests were searched at dusk and dawn. Once the occurrences were confirmed and the surrounding nearest rocky cliffs was examined in the Nilgiri Eastern Slopes Range of Nilgiri North Forest Division in Moyar Valley. The moment was observed using a telescope (29 X) and a binocular (52 X 10). Nest search was carried out during the drier months of October to May, wherever the movement was frequently observed on the rocky cliffs. On 12th October 2016
we are recorded a pair of Long-billed vulture soaring on the hill slopes in Kallampalayam areas of Nilgiri North Forest Division in Moyar Valley (11.53149°N & 76.96922°E, elevation 746m). We targeted that pair and keenly monitored the pair activities. On observation a vulture landed the rocky cavity that we are intensively monitoring. Further monitoring was carried out to confirm the breeding activities of Long-billed vulture in the rocky cliff. On 23 April 2017, Long-billed vulture juvenile flying activities were observed on the rocky cliff to confirm the successful breeding of the pair in that rocky cliff. Stotrabhashyam et al (2015) recoded six nesting sites of Long-billed vulture in India including two nesting sites in Tamil Nadu and Venkitachalam & Senthilnathan (2015) recorded that a total of four breeding sites of Long-billed vulture in Nilgiri North Forest Division and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in Moyar Valley. The present nesting site is an additional new breeding site of Long-billed vulture in Moyar valley.

References


Acknowledgement

The authors thank the Raptor Research and Conservation Foundation for their support of this project. Our wholehearted thanks to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden of Tamil Nadu state for giving us necessary permission to carry out the field work. Our special thanks are due to the District Forest Officer of the Nilgiri North Forest Division for providing permission and all logistic supports to carry out the field work. We thank our field assistants Mr. R. Bomman, K. Manigandan B. Vishnu and P. Prabu for taking lots of pain in collecting field data.

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Citation: Samson, A. & B. Ramakrishnan (2018). Long-billed vultures: Additional new breeding site of Long-billed vultures (Gyps indicus) in Moyar Valley, Tamil Nadu, Southern India. Bird-o-soar #09.

In: Zoo’s Print 33(1): 23:25