



# Vulture Conservation Program Awareness and Monitoring

## March 2011 Report

An initiative of:



**With support from:** Department of Animal Husbandry, Uttarakhand



India has nine species of vultures in wild and only a decade ago, the population of vultures in India was estimated at over 80 million. Now, their numbers are down to a few thousand. This is due to a drug called Diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) which is widely used to treat cattle (an illegal activity as the use of Diclofenac in livestock was banned in 2008).

The conservation of Vultures has become one of the top conservation priorities in India. Contributing towards this goal, Society for Mahseer Conservancy started its Vulture conservation programme in June 2010 in Uttarakhand (Uttarakhand having all the nine species of vultures found in India).

The objectives of our program are to sanitise Uttarakhand and adjoining UP from Diclofenac by 2014 - to ensure that it is synchronised with the planned BNHS captive bred vultures release in 2015, to build awareness about eliminating the use of Diclofenac and promote Meloxicam as the alternative drug and to bring about behaviour change among local communities for safe disposal of Diclofenac treated dead animals.

Following activities were undertaken during the month of March 2011, towards achievement of these objectives:

## 1. Monitoring of Vulture Colonies

The monitoring of vulture community continued during the month of March. The monitoring was undertaken in the Ringora and Tumeria colonies by Mr. Narendar Kumar and Mr. Kamal Chimmwal.

Following were the findings of the monitoring of the vulture colonies

| S. No. | Indicators  | Ringora Colony<br>(Monitored by<br>Narendra & Kamal) | Tumeria Colony<br>(Monitored by<br>Narendra & Kamal)    |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 1      | Total number of nests   | 10   | 8   |
| 2      | Number of active nests (i.e. with chicks or adults on the nest) | 10   | 8   |
| 3      | Number of chicks  | 5 (confirmed)  | 3 (confirmed)   |
| 4      | Number of adults perching                                       | 24   | 4   |
| 5      | Number of adults flying in the vicinity                         | 16   |   |
| 6      | Vultures exhibiting drooping head symptoms                      | 0  | 0   |
| 7      | Any other behaviours shown /comments                            |  | All the nests in this colony are of Indian white backs. |

## 2. Ban of 'over the counter' sale of Diclofenac

We have received active support of the veterinary doctor at government Hospital, Ramnager , towards ban of over the counter sales of Diclofenac and he has also been actively advocating to the other stakeholders on the ban of the distribution and sale of Diclofenac in the area.

## 3. Diclofenac Presence Survey

Our field staff covered 40 villages spread across the 5 blocks falling within two districts of Nainital and Udhamasinghnagar , i.e. , Ramnagar (Dist. Nainital), Ramgarh (Dist. Nainital) Khatima (Dist. Udhamasinghnagar), Gadarpur (Dist. Udhamasinghnagar),Kashipur (Dist. Udhamasinghnagar), during the month of March. Their coverage has been summarised below:

The following villages were covered:

|    |                       |    |                |
|----|-----------------------|----|----------------|
| 1  | Loshgyani             | 21 | Biriya         |
| 2  | Chatola (Ramgarh)     | 22 | Majhola        |
| 3  | Badi Baaj (Ramgarh)   | 23 | Biriya Majhola |
| 4  | Simraad (Ramgarh)     | 24 | Chand Pur      |
| 5  | Tikoori (Ramgarh)     | 25 | Sukhram Nagar  |
| 6  | Badi Baaj (Ramgarh)   | 26 | Korung Ghat    |
| 7  | Chopra (Ramgarh)      | 27 | Pipliya        |
| 8  | Nathuwakhan (Ramgarh) | 28 | Bura Kishni    |
| 9  | Kool (Ramgarh)        | 29 | Bun Katiya     |
| 10 | Suyal Gaarh (Ramgarh) | 30 | Purna Pur      |
| 11 | Shakkan Pur           | 31 | Chandeli       |
| 12 | Himmatpur Block       | 32 | Gandhi Nagar   |
| 13 | Lalit Pur             | 33 | Kuva Khera     |
| 14 | Kallan Pur            | 34 | Abdulla Nagar  |
| 15 | Kathiya Pur           | 35 | Bavan Puri     |
| 16 | Sohan pur             | 36 | Sakeniya       |
| 17 | Nai Basti No.12       | 37 | Mardan Majra   |
| 18 | Kundeshwari           | 38 | Jhuni Majra    |
| 19 | Shiv Lal Pur Dallu    | 39 | Kankata        |
| 20 | Diya II               | 40 | Bake Nya       |

Table 1: Summary of Diclofenac Awareness Survey

|   | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February     | March        |
|---|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of interviews                        | 6    | 7    | 9      | 7         | 693     | 841      | 778      | 3171    | 2910         | <b>3177</b>  |
| Number of people present                    | 35   | 42   | 34+    | 29        | 1713    | 2057     | 1761     | 6132    | 6139         | <b>7840</b>  |
| Total no. of livestock                      | 55   | 202  | 311    | 88        | 3063    | 4472     | 3434     | 13259   | 10069        | <b>12809</b> |
| Number heard of Diclofenac                  | 2    | 4    | 3      | 6         | 48      | 103      | 88       | 226     | 160          | <b>331</b>   |
| Number that use medical treatment           | 6    | 2    | 5      | 3         | 676     | 806      | 753      | 2481    | 2484         | <b>2956</b>  |
| Number that have used Diclofenac            | 1    | 1    | 2      | 1         | 6       | 20       | 2        | 5       | 1            | <b>1</b>     |
| Number that have heard of Meloxicam         | 0    | 0    | 1      | 1         | 7       | 10       | 4        | 256     | 57           | <b>67</b>    |
| Percentage of interviewees using Diclofenac | 16%  | 14%  | 22%    | 14%       | 0.8%    | 2%       | 0.26%    | 0.2%    | <b>.034%</b> | <b>.031%</b> |

March Survey shows a slight increase in both the no of people covered as well as the no of interviews Conducted ( as shown above the coverage was maximum since the start of the project ). The livestock population analysed was again high (12809) . It also shows a fair no of cattle falling sick and receiving medical aid but the percentage of Diclofenac usage seems to have gone even down (at 0.031%) but the percentage of villagers who have heard of Meloxicam is also low (just 2.9% of total people interviewed) .

Table 2: Summary of Diclofenac Users

| Village  | No. Present | No. of Livestock | Purchased from? | Cost (INR) | Period of usage | Heard of Meloxicam | Aware of vulture decline | Aware of cause | Disposal of carcass |
|----------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Sakeniya | 3           | 1                | NA              |            | NA              | Yes                | Yes                      | No             | Thrown in forest    |

Diclofenac was found to be used in treatment of sick animal at one location in the village of Sakeniya (Block Gadarpur). The respondent was aware of the vulture decline but was had no clue about the reason of their decline. He has used Diclofenac provided by vet. Unfortunately he didn't have awareness about safe disposal of the carcass and used to throw the dead animal inside the forest.

### 3. Other meetings

- Meeting with Ms. Veena Bist, Vice president , Uttarakhand Animal Welfare Board was held in March, during which we screened the movie “vanishing Vulture” for the team with her. we also briefed her about our vulture conservation initiatives and the achievements so far.  
She stressed the need for working together and collective effort by all the stakeholders to prevent the use of Diclofenac in treatment of cattle and for building awareness on the use of Meloxicam. She offered all her support for this noble cause. She also offered to organise meeting with the Chief Minister , Uttarakhand and the Agriculture & Animal Husbandry Minister , Uttarakhand to ensure ministerial support for this initiative.  
Mr. Rajeev Singh (Veterinary Doctor, Govt. Veterinary Hospital , Ramnagar) and Mr. Bhandari (Ex. Zila Panchayat Member, Pauri Garhwal) also participated in the meeting.
- We met with our field staffs on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March and explained to them the new strategy we will undertake in our vulture program from the month of April.  
We briefed them about the change in strategy for the vulture conservation (focus on Vet. and Pharmacist and Skinners for sampling of the visceral parts of the dead cattle).  
We also discussed the MIS formats and need for triangulation of data obtained.

### 4. Changes in the team

- Ms. Nicola Addison was back in the team after a gap of few months.
- Mr. Lalit Negi has rejoined the team for supporting Advocacy activities on Vulture Conservation

### 5. Overall March Progress

The month of March was the transition point for our vulture conservation programme as we have changed our strategy and focus in accordance to the recommendations and suggestions given by Dr. Richard Cuthbert ( Sr. Scientist, RSPB) during his last visit to the project.

Besides the activities mentioned following were the other activities carried out during the past month:

- We participated in the **Pant Nagar Kisan Mela** to build awareness on conservation of Vultures, among the farmers and cattle holders who were attending the farmers fair. The fair was organised between 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of march 2011 and Mr. Narendra, Mr. Kamal and Mr. Pyarelal participated in the event from Mahseer conservancy .  
They tried to build awareness with the use of different IEC material , including posters , banners and handouts.
- We organised a two day cleanliness drive to build awareness on safe disposal of garbage . The drive was organised on 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of march 2011, to clean up the quintals of garbage including polythene, plastic bottles and wrappers that had accumulated into dirt heaps and polythene dumps around the famed Corbett Tiger reserve. These polythene dumps ultimately get washed out into the Kosi River, polluting the lifeline of Ramnagar. The drive was carried out with the support of

Corbett Tiger Reserve from Ladua Chaur to Gargia under the Dhikuli village besides the Corbett Tiger Reserve.

More than five quintals of polythene garbage were collected from this small stretch of National Highway, during just two days drive.

- Dr. Rajeev Singh (Vet. Doctor , Government Veterinary Hospital , Ramnagar) has offered his help in carcass sampling (sampling of Gall Bladder and Liver ) for evidence of Diclofenac.

## 6. April Plans

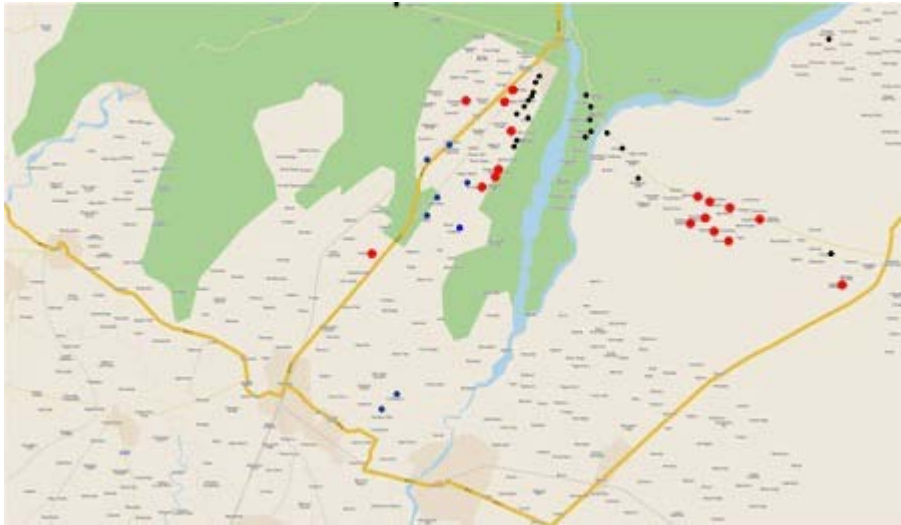
- Targeting Vets, Para Vets, pharmacists , Quacks and PRI representatives on the Diclofenac awareness and survey work .
- Identification of Skinners and taking their active support for collecting carcass samples or tissue samples (sample of gall bladder and the liver) for evidence of Diclofenac.
- Regular Vulture Monitoring at Ringora , Tumeria & Hathidagar vulture colonies
- Identification of Dumping (Carcass) areas and special focus on these areas for awareness campaign and for carcass sampling .
- We will be focussing on qualitative household survey and will target specific individuals / groups. We will also be focussing on participating in different events and functions to increase visibility and reaching out to larger audience.
- Awareness campaign during Chaiti mela, Kashipur (5 April to 5 May 2011)

## 7. Project Vulture (Team)

- **Sumantha Ghosh:** President of Mahseer Conservancy and local naturalist with many years experience in the Corbett area.
- **Nicola Addison:** Project Vulture field co-ordinator and ecologist with experience working with New Zealand birds of prey.
- **Hem Bahuguna:** Field Support, head of the safari team at Tiger Camp, qualified Park guide, and naturalist with many years experience in the Corbett Area.
- **Dr. Rajeev Singh:** Local veterinary officer of Ramnagar provides a vital link to the veterinary and farming community.
- **Mr. U C Tiwari:** Corbett National Park, Park Warden, instrumental in involving the forest department in the vulture program.
- **Sharad Kumar Jha:** Has joined in the capacity of Head- Programme & operations with Society for Mahseer Conservancy.

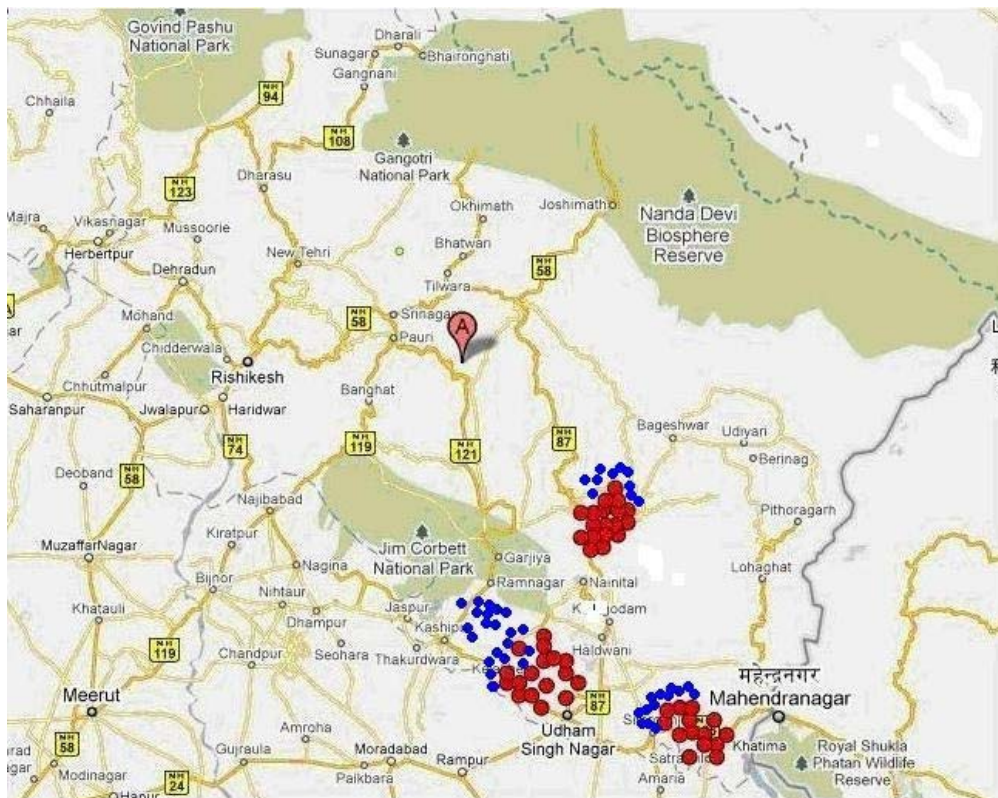
- **Narendar Singh:** Has been working with Mahseer Conservancy for many years, and is now heavily involved in the Vulture Program, particularly as liaison to our field staff.
- **Deewan Singh:** Is largely employed as a safari driver, but is also becoming more involved in the vulture campaign. He is present at most of the external events that are held.
- **Karan Bhandari:** A recent part of the Vulture family. He is Webmaster for Mahseer Conservancy.
- **Kamal Chhimwal:** A new member of our Vulture family, who does most of the Field Visits, interacts with the Local Community and helps to make more and more people aware of the Diclofenac and Vulture relation.
- **Pushpa Pandey:** She is from Khatima. She has a work of 5 yrs in another N.G.O. She is covering Block Khatima.
- **Pyarelal:** He is from Gadarpur. He is a para – vet. He has a work experience of 2 yrs. He is covering Gadarpur Block.
- **Bhuvan Chand:** He is from Ramgarh. He has a work experience of 2 yrs in another N.G.O. He is covering Ramgarh Block.
- **Mohan Singh:** He is from Kundeshwari. He is a fresher. He is covering Kashipur Block.

## Appendix One –Distribution



Map of Awareness Work March 2011

The medium dots in (blue) show the area of survey for the month of March. The other dots are for the past few months.



The map above shows Khatima, Gadarpur and Ramgarh area. This area is not shown in the previous map given above. The villages covered this month are marked in blue dots. The dots in red are the villages covered during previous months.



## Events during the month of March 2011:



Image 1: Participants of the *Pant Nagar Kisan Mela* studying the handouts on Vulture Conservation, distributed by Mahseer Conservancy functionaries



Image 2: Banner on Vulture conservation displayed at one of the prominent place at *Pantnagar Kisan Mela*





Image 3: Dumps of Polythene being removed from the roadside around the National Park during the drive



Image 4 : Heaps of polythene garbage collected during the cleanliness campaign around the Tiger Reserve, being removed for safe disposal