

in the population of Long-billed Vulture, a most critically endangered species, at Bayana, Bharatpur (Rajasthan).

The senior Indian ornithologist, S. A. Hussain (Karkala, Karnataka) and, Hans Winkler (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria) delivered invited talks in the session, "Avian migration, habitat use and general behaviour". S.A. Hussain described the bird migration pattern in the Indian Subcontinent. He gave an overview of the most recent research work conducted in this field. Hans Winkler reported that migrants possessed smaller brains than residents. The other participants of this session, A. Mukherjee (University of Cape town, South Africa), Sangeeta Rani (Lucknow University, Lucknow), Pratyush Patankar (M S University of Baroda, Vadodara), Mohd. Arshad (B. Z. University, Pakistan), V. K. Tomar (I.A.R.I., New Delhi), D. M. Jathewa (Junagarh Agriculture University, Jamnagar), and M. Soma (University of

Tokyo, Japan) highlighted research in the field of habitat use and behavioural biology.

Three poster sessions (51 participants) exhibited avian biodiversity on a global scale including reports from deteriorating habitats of the world and their impact on bird biodiversity.

In the valedictory session, chief guest R. S. Tolia (Chief Secretary of Uttaranchal) stated that India is one of the 12 mega-biodiversity countries of the world which provide suitable habitat for the conservation of all kinds of biodiversity. Peter Marler (University of California, Davis), Co-chairperson of the International Advisory Committee of the conference presented the conference report and suggested that there is need for such conferences to fill the large-gap in the conservation efforts at global level. The recommendations of the conference were presented by S. A. Hussain (Karkala, Karnataka). It was recommended that:

- (a) There is a need to increase knowledge and awareness of wetlands and their values and all wetland-type habitats should be conserved through legislation and government policies.
- (b) Studies should concentrate on satellite tracking of migratory birds involving both laboratory and field scientists in developing a richer understanding of the subject and for the conservation of migratory birds.
- (c) The state and central government should establish an integrated conservation and development network for newly identified IBAs and strengthen national legislation for the protection of sites that are of exceptional importance for biodiversity.
- (d) Detailed studies on the ecology and breeding behaviour of endangered avian species should be undertaken for better conservation and management measures.

### Indian White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* nesting in Sakrohar village, Khagaria district, Bihar, India

Sunil K. Choudhary, Santosh Kr. Tiwari, Sushant Dey & Subhasis Dey

University Department of Botany, T. M. Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur 812007, Bihar, India. Email: sunil\_yikramshila@yahoo.co.in

On 3.iii.2004 while on a distribution survey of Greater Adjutant-Stork *Leptoptilos dubius*, we saw 20 Indian White-backed Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* in Sakrohar village (25°36'26.0"N, 86°49'53.7"E), which is located in the floodplain area of the Kosi River in Khagaria district of Bihar, about 107km north-east of Bhagalpur. Local people reported that the vultures had arrived in the village 10-12 days ago, around 20-22.ii.2004. We located two nests on Palmyra Palms *Borassus flabellifer*. We could not see inside the nests at that time, as we were on a different mission.

We visited the village again on 11.iv.2004, especially to document the details of the nesting of the vultures. Both the nests, one each on a Palmyra, were located at a height of about 20m. The nests were built at the junction of three fronds' bases. The insides of the nests were not visible from the ground. A bamboo ladder was erected close to the palms that could be climbed up to a height that matched that of the nest. This was done with great difficulty with the help of local people. One researcher climbed up to peep into the nests. Each nest was 90cm long, 45cm wide and 12cm deep and had no distinct shape. The base of the nest was made up of haphazardly arranged dried twigs

and leaves of Arjuna *Terminalia arjuna*, palm trees, and of other unidentified plant material. Only one chick (c. 70cm long) was present in each of the two nests. The chicks were able to move around the nest on their own. A parent attacked the researcher and his palm was injured in defending himself. We watched the nests for three days after this observation and found to our satisfaction that the vultures did not desert the nests. From interviews with local residents about the vulture's arrival in the village (around 20-22.ii.2004), and our first sighting of the vultures in the village on 3.iii.2004, when the nests were already built, we estimated the age of the chicks as one-month old. At great risk we were able to take some photographs and took some video-footage of the nests, chicks and the surrounding place in general. It will be interesting to mention that we had spotted a group of 50 Indian White-backed Vultures feeding on a buffalo carcass, in an Navtola (25°31'48"N, 86°41'45"E, Khagaria district, c. 80km from Bhagalpur), adjacent to the present sighting on 8.vii.2002. That flock had many juveniles in it.

Our present observation of two Indian White-backed Vultures in north-east Bihar has been documented by The Peregrine

Fund, as part of their Asian Vulture Population Project (<http://www.peregrinefund.org/vulture/coverage.asp?speciesID=2>). A map on this website displays active nesting sites of *Gyps* vultures in India (26 in all, 1985/86-2003/04). This record was the first one from Bihar.

We have numerous secondary reports about the sighting of *Gyps* vultures in this locality. In view of the Critically Endangered status of Indian White-backed Vultures (Islam and Rahmani 2002), more search trips in the locality are required to establish its range of distribution in the area, and a study on annual basis on its habitat, population abundance and nesting.

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#### Reference

Islam, M. Zafar-ul, and Asad R. Rahmani. 2002. Threatened birds of India. *Buceros* 7 (1&2): 6 pr.II., iii-x, 1-102.