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— Short Notes —

Indian White-backed Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* in the Sigur region of Tamil Nadu

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In June 2007, on a visit to Cheetal Walk, a property of the Sigur Nature Trust, located in the Sigur region (11°32'N 76°41'E), I spotted four White-rumped Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* circling overhead. They then disappeared further eastwards towards Sathyamangalam. In May 2007, Mr N. A. Naseer, a photographer, had sighted eight *G. bengalensis* resting on one of the trees further upstream along the Sigur River.

In May 2006, Dr William Noble had recorded 24 vultures feeding on a dead buffalo at Mangalapatti, which is about 50 km east of Sigur. To quote Dr Noble, "A buffalo had been shot not far from the place where we stayed at Mangalapatti. Tried to obtain images of the vultures as they flew in, but the blind was not adequate to prevent the vultures seeing me for they have such good eyesight. Gave up. However, on the way out in the Jeep just a bit later in the morning, we managed to use it as a blind and went off-road to reach as close as we could to a tree where vultures were gathered. Thus we managed to obtain some images before the vultures took off. There were also vultures gathered on other trees nearby. Not much farther down the road, we noticed vultures coming in

to a place up-slope, but did not stop to investigate the place if something else dead (undetermined). Conservatively, we saw a total of at least 25 vultures. But there were probably more than that, which offers some hope for the future."

It is quite possible that the vultures I had seen in June 2007 were part of the same group sighted by Dr Noble, and probably have a nesting site somewhere in the region. The photographs sent by Dr Noble confirm these to be White-rumped vultures.

This site, Cheetal Walk, on the banks of the Sigur River used to host nesting colonies of White-rumped vultures on two large *Terminalia arjuna* trees in the 1960s and 1970s when the property was established. This nesting population had gradually declined since the 1970s and had completely disappeared by the early 1980's (Davidar & Davidar 2002). A few vultures were sighted in 2000, but were not seen again.

Let's hope the White-rumped vultures are back for good.

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