**The Konkan Vulture Project: Vulture Food Base Trend due to Socio-Economic, Geographical and Policy Factors**

**Background:** It has been noted that even though the northern parts of the Konkan region of Maharashtra have colonies of *Gyps bengalensis* and *Gyps indicus*, no colonies have been sighted in Southern in past 2 years. The food availability for vultures might be one of the reasons behind this decline as the state wide ban on disposing dead cattle in open is not being uniformly followed. Furthermore urbanization, lowered numbers of cattle, selling of weak cattle to slaughter houses may also affect food availability. Therefore an extensive study is required to draw a clear picture about the availability of food for the existing vulture population.

**OBJECTIVES**
- To analyze effect of socio-economic, geographical conditions, carcass disposal state policies and their implementations on vulture food base and existence of vulture colonies.
- Create action areas to establish vulture safe Konkan

**CURRENT UPDATE (OCT – DEC 2014)**
- In most places people inform that burial of dead carcasses to be the preferred method over dumping it in open based on the guidance given by Animal Husbandry Department and local governing body as cleanliness drive. Though that be the case there are villages dumping carcasses in open.
- Local people have been appointed to monitor identified carcass dumping to check possibility of vulture sightings. Regular communication and visits are being undertaken to check the work.

- Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra's contact numbers have been circulated in and around these places to get any information about vulture sightings.
- Meetings with local governing bodies (Gram Panchayats), Forest Department, Animal Husbandry Department are being undertaken in the project region.
- Letters to local governing bodies in district Ratnagiri have been sent to seek information about nesting, sightings, carcass disposal method and information about chemist shop vulture sightings.
- Surveys –
  - Data is being collected using structured as well as semi-structured survey depending on person being interviewed.
  - Data is also being conducted through door-to-door meetings and village level meetings wherever possible.
  - Surveys of general public, cattle owners, farm owners are being conducted

**NEXT QUARTER (JAN – MAR 2015)**
- On-going communication and monitoring of locally appointed people.
- Letters to local governing bodies in district Sindhudurga and Ratnagiri.
- Survey of targeted audience in the project region.

**ANNEXURE**

**Annexure 1: English translation of letter and survey form being set to Gram Panchayats (Original in Marathi)**

To
Hon. Head of the Village Governing Council

Dear Sir/M'am

Subject: Vulture related information from your village

Vulture population has drastically declined in last 10 years. Veterinary usage of Diclofenac – a painkiller is the main reason for this decline. This medicine if present in dead carcasses eaten by vultures, affects vultures' kidneys leading to its death. Let's shoulder the responsibility to stop further decline of this scavenger which helps to keep our environment clean.

We are requesting the following information related to vulture conservation and protection. This information will help us to decide further course of action. For villager's information we also request you to display the attached vulture conservation leaflet at prominent places and chemists if any.

We request you to fill the following information with the help of informed villagers and send it to us at the earliest.

We appreciate your cooperation.

Thank you

**For Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra**

**Vulture Information**

Village            :                                                          Date:

Tehsil             :

District           :

Head of Governing Council          :

| | |
|---|---|
| Are vultures sighted in village? | Yes / No |
| Is there a vulture colony in village? | Yes / No |
| If yes, how many nests were present in 2013-14 | |
| What are common practices to dispose dead cattle? | Burial / Throw it in open away from village / Throw it near river |
| Any reasons for preferring these practices? | |
| Any other information related to vultures you may want to provide | |