



# drishti

## Vulture Culture

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India is home to nine species of vultures, but most of them face the danger of extinction.

The nine species of vultures & their International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) status are:

Sr. No.	Name of Vulture
1.	Oriental Vulture (Gyps bengalensis)
2.	Slender-billed Vulture (Gyps tenuirostris)
3.	Long-billed Vulture (Gyps indicus)
4.	Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus)
5.	Red-headed Vulture (Sarcogyps calvus)

		White-backed Vulture
		Slender-billed Vulture
		Long-billed Vulture
		Indian Gyps Vulture
		Himalayan Griffon Vulture
		Cinereous Vulture
		Bearded Vulture

## Conservation Efforts

- To **study the cause of deaths** of vultures in India, a Vulture Care Centre (VCC) was set up at **Pinjore, Haryana** in 2001.
- Later **in 2004**, the VCC was upgraded to being the **first** Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres (VCBC) in India.

At present, there are **nine** Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres (VCBC) in India, of which three are directly administered by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

- The **main objective** of the VCBCs was to look after the vultures and **breed them** in captivity and also release them into the wild.
- India's conservation efforts are focussed on the three species of vultures which are **Critically Endangered** according to the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** namely,
  - *White-backed Vulture,*
  - *Slender-billed Vulture, and*
  - *Long-billed Vulture.*

## Reasons for Death of Vultures

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- The major reason behind the vulture population getting nearly wiped out was the **drug Diclofenac**. It was found in the carcass of cattle on which the vultures feed.
  - The drug was commonly administered to cattle **to treat inflammation**.
  - Its veterinary use was **banned in 2008** by the Government of India.
  - **Bioaccumulation** (the gradual accumulation of substances, such as pesticides, or other chemicals in an organism) of Diclofenac caused **kidney failure** in Vultures, leading to death.
  - Diclofenac is dangerously fatal for Vultures. Even 1% of it in carcass would kill the Vulture in a short time after it feeds such carcass.
- The **poisoned carcasses** were dumped to kill some local stray animals. But when vultures fed on them, it became one of the vital reasons leading to their death.  
It is imperative to manage our carcass dumps and make sure that poisoned carcasses are not dumped for the vultures to feed on.
- The forest department **cremates the animal carcasses instead of burying** them, to keep the poachers away. But this practice is denying food to vultures leading to their death out of **starvation**.

## Way Forward

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- The forest department needs to give emphasis on **creating awareness** and on **creating safe zones for vultures** in places where there is an existing vulture population.  
So far **nine states** have undertaken programmes to create safe habitats for vultures.
- Vultures are **slow-breeding birds**, there is a need for immediate intervention to save them from extinction.

**Source: TH**