



## Raptor Species under Threat

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### Why in News

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According to recent research, **around 30% of the 557 raptor species** around the world **are threatened by extinction** to some degree.

It is an analysis by the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** and **BirdLife International** (a global partnership of conservation organisations (NGOs)).

### Key Points

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- **Raptor Species:**
  - **About:** A raptor is a **bird of prey**. A bird of prey is a **carnivore (meat eater)** that kills and eats mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, rodents as well as other birds.
    - All raptors have a hooked beak, strong feet with sharp talons, keen eyesight, and a carnivorous diet.
  - **Significance:**
    - Raptors prey on a wide range of vertebrates and thus, **facilitate long-distance seed dispersal**. This indirectly increases seed production and **pest control**.
    - Birds of prey are **predators at the top of the food chain**; because threats like pesticides, habitat loss, and climate change have the most dramatic impact on top predators, these are referred to as **indicator species**.
  - **Population:** Indonesia has the most raptor species, followed by Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.
  - **Examples:** Owls, **vultures**, hawks, falcons, **eagles**, kites, buteos, accipiters, harriers, and osprey.

- **Cause of Threat:**
  - **Use of Diclofenac:** Some **vulture populations** have declined by over 95% in Asian countries **such as India** because of the widespread use of **diclofenac**.  
Diclofenac is a **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory** drug.
  - **Deforestation:** The population of **Philippine eagles**, the largest variety of eagles in the world, decreased rapidly in the last decades due to extensive deforestation.  
The Philippine Eagle is **Critically Endangered** under IUCN Red List.
  - **Shooting and Poisoning:** In **Africa**, **vulture populations** have decreased by an average of 95% in rural areas over the last 30 years as the result of shooting and poisoning through feeding on carcasses of livestock treated with diclofenac.
  - **Habitat Loss and Degradation:** The **Annobon scops-owl**, restricted to Annobon Island off West Africa, was recently classified as '**critically endangered**' under the IUCN Red List because of rapid habitat loss and degradation.
- **Conservation Efforts:**
  - **Raptors MoU (Global):** The Memorandum of Understanding on the **Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia** is also known as Raptors MoU.
    - It is an agreement under **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**. **CMS or Bonn Convention** provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.
    - It is **not legally binding**.
  - **India's Conservation Efforts:**
    - **India is a signatory to Raptors MoU.**
    - For the conservation of vultures, India has launched a **Vulture Action Plan 2020-25**.
      - India is also a part of the **SAVE (Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction)** consortium.
      - The **Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre in Pinjore (Haryana)** is the world's largest facility within the state's Bir Shikargah Wildlife Sanctuary for the breeding and conservation of Indian vulture species.

**Source: DTE**