



Study on Raptor Ecology in Desert National Park

Why in News?

A research initiative focusing on [raptor ecology](#) has been launched in the [Desert National Park \(DNP\)](#) and its surrounding areas.

Key Points

- **About:** This study aims to **assess the status and local ecology** of breeding raptors in the region. The project, initiated by the [Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#), started on 21 July 2025, and is set to continue until July 2027.
 - The study will focus on the **movement and breeding patterns** of raptors, with an emphasis on understanding their spatial ecology and conservation needs.
- **Methodology:** As part of the project, two [vultures](#), a Tawny Eagle and a juvenile Egyptian Vulture, have already been fitted with [GPS transmitters](#) and backpack harnesses and released.
 - The study also includes collection of biological samples from six individuals each of **Red-headed Vulture**, White-rumped Vulture, [Indian Vulture](#), Egyptian Vulture, Tawny Eagle, and Laggar Falcon.
- **Legal Framework:** The study has been approved under **Section 12(A)** of the [Wildlife Protection Act 1972](#), ensuring that it aligns with legal and ethical standards.
 - Section 12(A) authorizes the **Chief Wild Life Warden** to grant, upon application and via a written order, permits to individuals or institutions to **conduct scientific research on wildlife**.
- **Significance:**
 - **Conservation Efforts:** To generate **vital data** that will help inform conservation strategies for these threatened raptor species.
 - **Raptor Protection:** The findings from the study are expected to contribute to the development of measures to safeguard the raptor species and their habitat, particularly in the [Thar Desert](#).

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.
- **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.
- **Conservation Efforts:**
 - 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 \(CMS\)](#).
 - It is not legally binding.
 - India is a signatory to Raptors MoU.
 - India is also a part of the [SAVE \(Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction\)](#) consortium.

- For the conservation of vultures, India has launched a [Vulture Action Plan 2020-25](#).
- 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.

Desert National Park

- **Geography and Location:** It covers 3,162 km² area across **Jaisalmer and Barmer** districts of Rajasthan.
 - It lies in the Thar Desert, a hot and arid region with very low rainfall (<100mm) and features sand dunes, rocky areas, and sandy plains.
- **Vegetation and Flora:** It is characterized by sparse vegetation, including thorny bushes, grasslands, and dunes. Notable tree species like **Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*)** and various Acacia species support the region's ecosystem.
- **Fauna and Biodiversity:** The park is home to 60 mammal species, 51 reptile species, and 100 bird species.
- Endemic and endangered species include the [Great Indian Bustard](#), Desert Fox, and the Laungwala Toad-headed Agama. It also hosts migrant birds like the Houbara Bustard.

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