

## Urgent action needed now

We need your support to fund the campaign and breeding centres.

- 1 To bring viable numbers of vultures of the three threatened species into captivity as soon as possible. Before it is too late.
- 2 To remove veterinary diclofenac from the environment, through public awareness and government control.

We need to replicate breeding centres like the one at Haryana at three more sites in India, as well as establishing centres in Nepal and Pakistan.

Vulture conservation action is also underway in Nepal (led by BCN) and Pakistan (by WWF, IUCN Pakistan, OSP and TPF), alongside national governments. BNHS and the RSPB support these efforts.



# HELP US STOP OUR VULTURES VANISHING

## How you can help

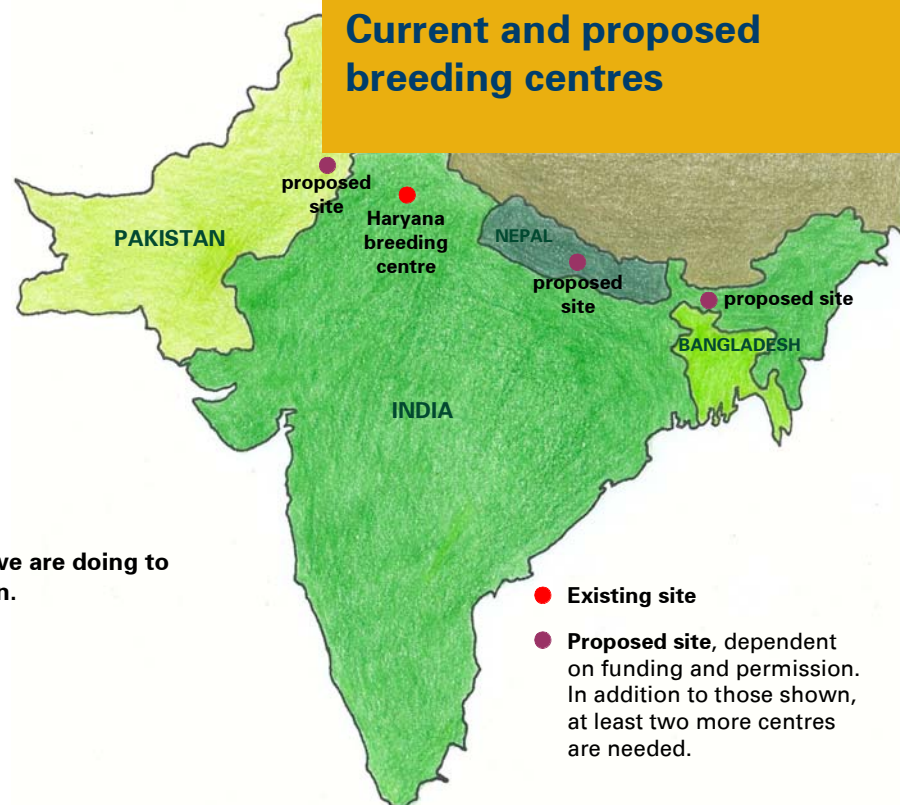
Please contact BNHS at:

**Dr Asad R. Rahmani – Director  
Bombay Natural History Society  
Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road  
Mumbai  
400 023  
India**

Or visit our partner website at:

[www.rspb.org.uk/vultures](http://www.rspb.org.uk/vultures)

where you can find out more about the work we are doing to save the vultures, and make an online donation.



### Key references

1. Oaks J L, Gilbert M, Virani M Z, Watson R T, Meteyer C U, Rideout B A, Shivaprasad H L, Ahmed S, Chaudry M J I, Arshad M, Mahmood S, Ali A & Khan A A (2004). Diclofenac residues as the cause of population decline of vultures in Pakistan. *Nature* 427: 630-633.
2. Shultz S, Baral H S, Charman S, Cunningham A A, Das D, Ghalsasi G R, Goudar M S, Green R E, Jones A, Bight P, Pain D J, Prakash V (2004). Diclofenac poisoning is widespread in declining vulture populations across the Indian subcontinent. *Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. B* (Suppl.) pp4
3. Green R E, Newton I, Shultz S, Cunningham A A, Gilbert M, Pain D J & Prakash V (2004). Diclofenac poisoning as a cause of vulture population declines across the Indian subcontinent. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 41: 793-800.

Official visits to the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre at Pinjore, Haryana have included one by the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Pradipto Ghosh), in January 2005



## An ecological disaster is occurring in Asia

Vultures used to be widespread here. But in barely a decade, they have declined to the brink of extinction.

The overall cause of the declines has now been identified as a drug called diclofenac. It is given to livestock as an anti-inflammatory drug. If the livestock die within a few days of being treated with the diclofenac, their carcasses still contain the drug. This is toxic to vultures and causes them to die of kidney failure.

Now three species face extinction. The rate of decline has been staggering: at least 97% in just 12 years in India, and 92% in five years in Pakistan.

The ecological and social consequences of losing a bird species have never been so starkly apparent. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and its partners are calling on governments, industry and supporters to help to save the vultures.

## We have to act quickly



## Vultures – their vital role

Vultures have always been a very important part of life in Asia. Part of the cultural and religious fabric, they play an important ecological and social role.

They are vital for health, cleaning the environment of rotting carcasses. As vultures are decreasing, there has been an alarming increase in feral dogs, attracted to the rotting meat. This poses health and safety threats.

Vultures are also central to the customs of the Parsi community, who traditionally place their dead on 'towers of silence' where vultures feed.

## The dodo was not pushed to extinction as quickly as this

The decline of the vultures is one of the most severe of any bird species.

BNHS, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the Indian Government and the Indian Veterinary Research Institute are among the organisations leading the urgent action to save them. Without this action, these species will become extinct.

## The story of the dramatic decline

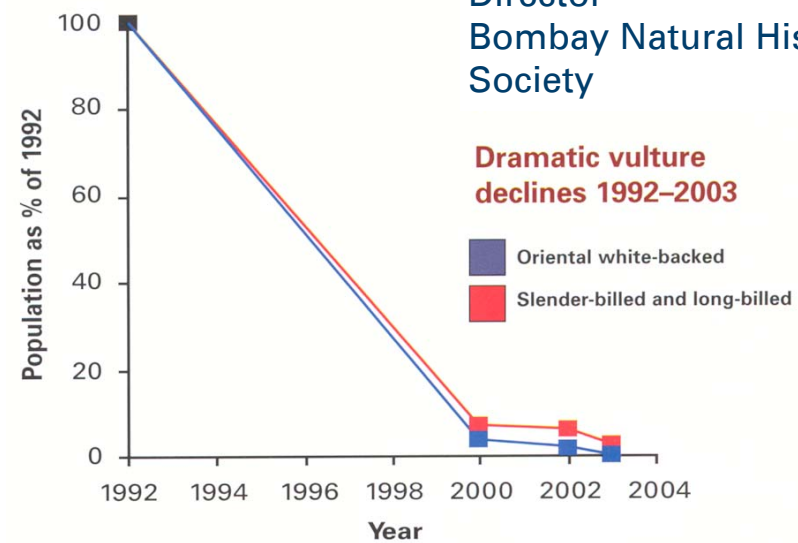
In the 1980s, the Oriental white-backed vulture was thought to be the most abundant large bird of prey in the world. The population has crashed by at least 97% in 12 years. The loss is tens of millions of birds.

The Oriental white-backed vulture\*, and the closely related slender-billed\*\* and long-billed vultures\*\*\*, are now classified as 'critically endangered'.

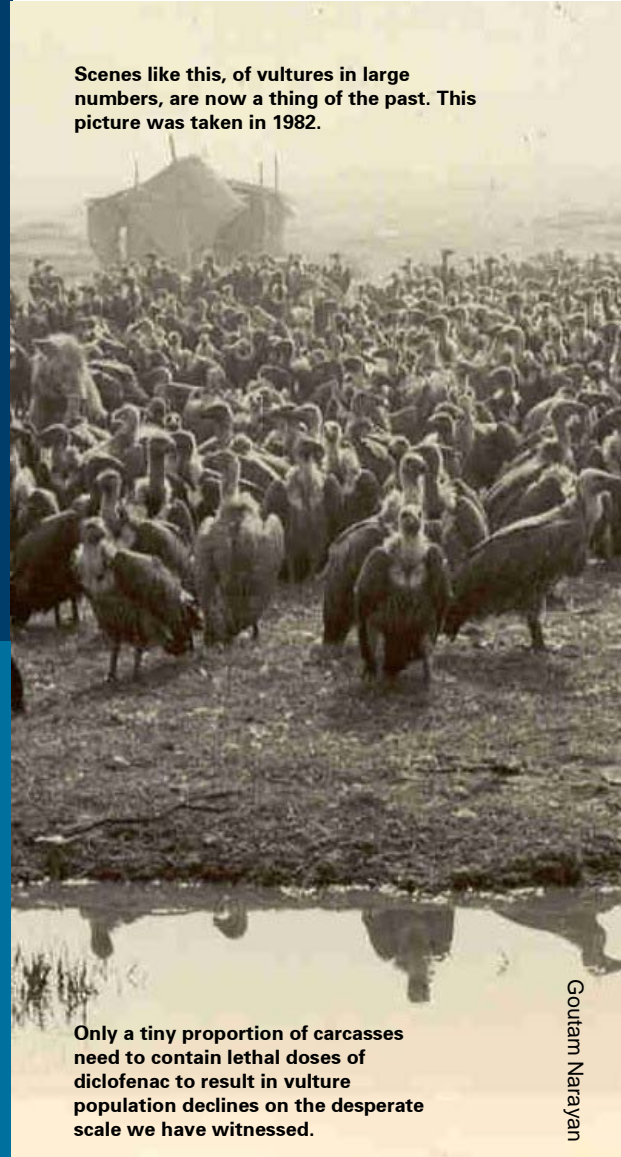
The declines were first recorded in India by BNHS in the mid-nineties. Research published in the scientific journal Nature by the Peregrine Fund (TPF) and the Ornithological Society of Pakistan (OSP) shows that diclofenac is a major cause of the declines in Pakistan.

\*Gyps bengalensis  
\*\*Gyps tenuirostris  
\*\*\*Gyps indicus

Research from India and Nepal, published by the RSPB, BNHS, Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) confirms that veterinary diclofenac is the major cause of vulture declines across South Asia.



Scenes like this, of vultures in large numbers, are now a thing of the past. This picture was taken in 1982.



Only a tiny proportion of carcasses need to contain lethal doses of diclofenac to result in vulture population declines on the desperate scale we have witnessed.

Goutam Narayan

## What we are urgently calling for

- The governments of India, Pakistan and Nepal to prevent the sale of veterinary diclofenac, and to make safe and affordable alternatives available to farmers.
- Six conservation breeding centres to be set up across the region for all three vulture species.

These have been set down in more detail in an international resolution passed in Bangkok in November 2004.

We need breeding centres if we are serious about saving vultures. Vultures bred in captivity will be reintroduced into the wild, once the environment is free of diclofenac. A vulture breeding centre was established in Haryana, India in 2003. It has now been expanded with capacity for 150 birds.



Goran Ekstrom

Now you see one where there used to be one hundred.

## Key players to take action

### Industry

Veterinary diclofenac is manufactured and sold by many pharmaceutical companies. We are calling on the industry to find, promote and make available viable and affordable alternatives.

### Government

Governments must recognise the seriousness of this issue. They must support the recovery programme, introduce bans on diclofenac, and enable breeding centres to be set up where they are needed.

### Supporters

We need to raise funds to set up the new breeding centres needed. This funding is vital to help the work we have begun to continue at the vulture breeding centre in Haryana. The Indian Government, the UK Government's Darwin Initiative and the Rufford Foundation are also supporting this work. More funds are needed.

**If you can help us to carry out this work you will be helping us give the vultures a chance to recover.**

Top left: vultures being treated at Haryana breeding centre

Top right: sick vulture

Opposite: healthy vulture in captivity

