

# Summary of 7th Annual Meeting of Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction

(Please download Full Report including the updated Blueprint Vulture Recovery Plan to 2025 on [www.save-vultures.org](http://www.save-vultures.org) )



Sundarbans, Bangladesh  
20-21 November 2017

Hosted by IUCN Bangladesh & Bangladesh Forest Department



*Report compiled and edited by Chris Bowden, SAVE Programme Manager*

*January 2018*

[Photo credits: Sayam Chowdhury, IUCN Bangladesh & Chris Bowden]

SAVE is a consortium of 21 partners and many more associated organisations, with backing of the range-state governments of Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal and Pakistan, sharing the goal to identify and implement the priority actions (based on scientific evidence) that are urgently needed to conserve Asia's Critically Endangered vultures. See [www.save-vultures.org](http://www.save-vultures.org)

This summary includes key outputs from the annual meeting held in Bangladesh in November 2017, hosted and supported by The Bangladesh Forest Department and IUCN Bangladesh, with major support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and a donation from Hawk Mountain. Forty participants attended from all five range-states and there were additional contributions from Bhutan and Myanmar.

The outputs in this summary:

- 1) Revised priorities for 2018, agreed for South Asia and SE Asia
- 2) An overview summary of major progress and achievements during 2017, together with the outstanding issues
- 3) Meeting Participants
- 4) Current composition of SAVE
- 5) Summary table of the Blueprint actions by country and an appraisal of the progress being made for each

Note that this is intended only as a handy summary, but needs reference to the full report and specifically to the Blueprint to appreciate the context and enormous combined efforts and progress underway to conserve these magnificent birds.

# 1. Updated priorities for Asian vulture conservation in 2018

## 1.1 South Asia Vulture Conservation Priorities (Revised in SAVE plenary Nov 2017)

- Veterinary licenses to be withdrawn for two drugs – ketoprofen and aceclofenac - based on the good existing evidence that they are unsafe for vultures.
- An effective system of regulation of veterinary drugs, based upon safety-testing on vultures is continued for all current painkillers (NSAIDs) and for all potential new ones entering veterinary practice.
- Evaluate safety to vultures of nimesulide as a priority.
- Identify additional vulture safe NSAIDs (alternatives for vets).
- Defend and communicate the 2015 multi-dose ban of human diclofenac formulations to relevant authorities & stakeholders (India).
- Major efforts urgently needed within South Asia to address the immediate and increasing gap in funding for vulture conservation which now jeopardises the programme. [2018 proposal to work with BNHS to investigate CSR funding options for SAVE priority vulture conservation in India and elsewhere in Asia]
- Promotion of network and approach of ‘Vulture Safe Zones’ across South Asia with expansion to include trans-boundary cooperative efforts.
- Maintain and support the existing vulture conservation breeding programmes throughout South Asia.
- Create a safe environment for further soft releases of captive vultures at identified sites (100km radius) in Nepal and first soft releases in India in 2018, requiring satellite monitoring of the released birds.
- Improved availability of well-formulated meloxicam products thereby facilitating their popularity with veterinary practitioners.
- Use the Convention of Migratory Species’ Vulture Multi-species Action Plan as a tool to promote SAVE priority actions and engage with governments. Inform CMS about significant changes (e.g. changes to threats) in the SAVE region.
- Closely support National Vulture Recovery Committees and the Regional Steering Committee in order to facilitate the urgent implementation of the 2012 Delhi Regional Agreement and SAVE priorities



## 1.2 South East Asia Vulture Conservation Priorities

(Revised in SAVE plenary Nov 2017)

- Implementation of a high profile anti-poisoning campaign (across Cambodia and Myanmar)
- More effective law enforcement within protected sites to halt forest conversion and hunting (targeted law enforcement patrols and nest guardians) to protect priority vulture nesting areas.
- Effective spatial planning to retain the priority forest areas for vulture conservation, ensuring strong environmental impact assessments are carried out to prevent detrimental regional development projects (Cambodia, Myanmar?).
- Vulture restaurants continue to be maintained at five priority sites (Cambodia) to continue population monitoring.
- Develop Vulture Safe Zone concept for Cambodia.
- Improve quantification of population impact of poisoning on important vulture populations in Cambodia through better analysis.
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## 2. Overview of Selected SAVE activities & achievements in 2017

- **The outstanding achievements of 2017 include:**
  - **Govt ban of ketoprofen and aceclofenac** declared in two **Bangladesh** VSZs
  - **First releases** of captive-reared white-rumped vultures **in Nepal** (& satellite tracking of 11 wild birds)
  - Successfully **upholding the multi-dose-vial ban** in India (winning the challenge in Madras High court case brought by two pharma companies)
  - **Initiation of NSAID safety-testing program** on vultures by IVRI started for tolfenamic acid
  - Population trends in **Nepal for wild white-rumped vultures now positive** where diclofenac use has been stopped
  - The **first F2 generation** white-rumped vulture offspring (ie both parents were hatched in captivity) for the programme were fledged at Pinjore centre.
  - **Increasing Government** support and resources for breeding and release programme in **India**
- **Emerging concerns:**
  - Overall **population estimates** for all three Gyps species is significantly **lower** than previously thought (new India and Nepal road transects publication)
  - **Nimesulide and aceclofenac** veterinary use is apparently **increasing** fast (also ketoprofen) and other untested drugs coming into veterinary use.
- The **SAVE Blueprint** (Action Plan to 2025) developed in Feb 2014 and then updated at the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> SAVE meetings is being used more widely, As well as the Inter-Government Vulture Regional Steering Committee formally adopted it, but significantly, this year:
  - it has been formally incorporated into the newly adopted **Multi-species Vulture Action Plan** (MsAP) at the CMS CoP meeting in Manila, October 2017. The final MsAP is available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/p0yshqtbayoz7r/Vulture%20MSAP%202013%20Dec.pdf?dl=0>

- The updated Blueprint version was included as part of the 6<sup>th</sup> SAVE report circulated in March 2017, and made available on the SAVE website.
- **New SAVE Partners:** Following discussions at last year's meeting, one additional Core Partner was formally agreed during the year. This rectifies an anomaly that there was previously, SAVE having no Core partner from Cambodia, and was agreed and welcomed by Board:
  - **Cambodia Vulture Conservation Project.** This is a consortium of organisations including government charged with implementing the newly produced Action Plan. It

is currently led by BirdLife Cambodia, and the Board Member will be designated by that group for each meeting..(note Vorsak Bou was representative at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual meeting)

- No additional SAVE Associates were added during the year and the three Associates are currently subject to review (after two years) for potential renewal by Board and TAC. ToRs are being developed (see Associates reports p.80).
- FACC membership changes:
  - Ms Sarita Jnawali takes over from Mr Ganga Thapa (also from NTNC) on FACC
  - Naiky Ny replaces Phearun Sum on FACC (although Phearun remains linked and in contact)
  - Dr Narendra Pradhan steps down from FACC having departed BCN.
- [www.save-vultures.org](http://www.save-vultures.org) - RSPB gave significant support in funding an upgrade to the website. Ian Fisher and Laura Beasley from the International Species Recovery team put considerable effort into this and we take this opportunity to thank them for their very considerable efforts, help and support for Chris with this, which has resulted in a major improvement.
- The website visitor numbers have remained relatively constant, or slightly increased. Data on this is being made available shortly after an interruption.
- SAVE button donations increased over the previous year but remain similar to the other years since the establishment of SAVE (see below).
  - **Donate button.** The number of online donations has returned to a similar level to earlier years after a dip in 2016. The total was just over £2,500 (GBP) compared to £673 last year. There have been some superficial changes to the format of the donations procedure through the RSPB website, and these have now settled and we hope that can encourage more donations in future.



### 3. 7<sup>th</sup> SAVE Meeting Participants

Prof David Houston, SAVE Chairman	Roy P Thomas (Fed MoEFCC India)
Chris Bowden (RSPB) Program Man, FACC	Vorsak Bou (CVCG, BLCam, BL Sct)
Uddin Ishtiaq (IUCN B'desh Country Rep)	Sam Oeun (Cambodia Env Ministry)
Md. Jahidul Kabir CF FD Bangladesh	Gulshan Kumar (CWW Haryana)
Enam Ul-Haque Bangladesh FACC	Anil Sharma (IVRI) FACC
Md Salauddin DGDA Bangladesh	Subramanian Muralidharan (SACON)
Md Modinul Ahsan DFO FD Bangladesh	Mark Taggart (ERI) TAC
Md. Saifur Rahman MEF Bangladesh	Jamshed Chaudhry (WWF Pak)
M Monirul H Khan Univ Jahangirnagar TAC	Naiky Ny (BirdLife Cambodia) FACC
ABM Sarowar Alam IUCN B'desh Brd/TAC	Krishna Bhusal (BCN) TAC
Haseeb Md Irfanullah IUCN Bangladesh	Juergen Daemmgen (Germany)
Kazi Zenifer Azmiri IUCN Bangladesh	Phurpa Dorji (RSPN Bhutan)
Sakib Ahmad IUCN Bangladesh	Bharathidasan Subbaiah (Arulagam)
Md Tarik Kabir IUCN Bangladesh	Soumya Chakraborty (BNHS)
Sayam U Chowdhury (Bangladesh)	Sachin Ranade (BNHS)
Prof Rhys Green (TAC Chair)	Naveen Pandey (Corbett Fndn)
Jemima Parry-Jones, (Dir ICBP) Brd & TAC	Andrew Callender (RSPB Policy)
Vibhu Prakash (BNHS) TAC	Niaz Abdur Rahman (Bangladesh)
Deepak Apte (BNHS Dir) Board	
Ishana Thapa (BCN) Board	
Clare Stringer (RSPB) Board	
Govinda Gajurel (MS NTNC) Board	
Campbell Murn (HCT-UK) TAC	

**Apologies:** RD Jakati (FACC Chair), Nic Masters (ZSL) TAC, Simon Mahood (WCS Cambodia), Alex Hipkiss (RSPB), Chris Parish (TPF), Nick Lindsay (ZSL), Kerri Wolter (VULPRO), Paul Insua-Cao (RSPB) Devendra Swarup (ret'd IVRI) FACC, Mohini Saini (IVRI) TAC, Homi Khusrokhani (BNHS President) FACC, Anuj Jain (BirdLife Secretariat, Singapore), Chiran Pokharel (NTNC), Munir Virani, Stephane Ostrowski (WCS Afghanistan), Vinny Naidoo, Kiran Srivastava (RRCF), Suresh Kumar (WII), Laxman Poudyal (DNPWC Nepal), Shamim Ahmed (POJ) B'desh, Abdul Muqeed Majumdar (POJ) B'desh, Kedar Gore (Corbett Fndn) Phearun Sum. Amarinder Kaur (PCCF, Haryana), DN Singh (MS CZA India), BC Choudhury (FACC), PR Sinha (IUCN India), Scott Perkin (IUCN Asia), Irshad Rizwan (Biodiv Min CC, Pak, Thiri Dae We Aung (BANCA, Myanmar), Percy Avari (Bombay Vet College), Khimanand Balodi (Uttarakhand), Rohan Shringarpure (BNHS), Mandar Kulkarni (BNHS), Satya Prakash (Neohuman Society, Jharkhand) Kaset Sutasha (BCST, Thailand), Aban Marker Kabraji (IUCN Asia)



## 4. Composition & structure of SAVE including 2017 updates

**Chair:** Professor David Houston.

**Core Partners (Board)** - BNHS India, Bird Conservation Nepal, National Trust for Nature Conservation Nepal, Bangladesh National Vulture Recovery Committee, International Centre for Birds of Prey, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, WWF Pakistan and one new member added in 2017; Cambodia Vulture Conservation Project.



**Project Partners – Zoological Society of London, Hawk Conservancy Trust, Wildlife Conservation Society, The Peregrine Fund, BirdLife Cambodia.**



**Project Partners (Research & Govt.) – Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bangladesh Forest Department, Environmental Research Institute, VULPRO, University of Pretoria.**



### Key Supporting Agencies to SAVE objectives

**Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (India)**  
**Pakistan Forest Department**  
**Forest Department, People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
**Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Nepal**  
**Ministry of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries (Cambodia)**  
**Haryana State Forest Department**  
**West Bengal Forest Department**  
**Assam Forest Department**  
**Madhya Pradesh Forest Department**  
**Central Zoo Authority (India)**  
**Nepal Department of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation**  
**Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries department, Punjab Province**  
**IUCN Bangladesh Country Office**



**SAVE Associates** – Arulagam, Corbett Foundation, Prokriti O Jibon



SAVE meets to review priorities each year, and has two sub-committees, which report to these meetings. The current composition of these sub-committees is as follows:

### **SAVE Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Rhys Green (Chair) - Cambridge University Professor of Conservation Science  
& RSPB Principal research Biologist

Jemima Parry-Jones (Co-chair) - World expert raptor captive breeding &  
raptor biology

Vibhu Prakash - Principal Scientist BNHS and renowned raptor biologist

Mohini Saini – Principal Scientist, Wildlife Section at Indian Vet Research Institute

Monirul Khan – Assoc Professor, Dept Zoology, Jahangirnagar Univ., Bangladesh

Naresh Subedi – Senior Conservation Officer, NTNC Nepal

Toby Galligan – Snr Research Biologist, Int Research Dept, RSPB, UK

Mark Taggart – Snr Scientist, NSAIDs expert, Univ of Highland & Islands, UK

Krishna Bhusal – Vulture Conservation Programme Officer, Bird Conservation Nepal

Campbell Murn – Head Conservation & Research, Hawk Conservancy Trust (UK)

Chris Parish – Director California Condor reintroduction, The Peregrine Fund (USA)

Nic Masters – Head of Veterinary Services, ZSL & London Zoo

Chiranjibi Prasad Pokheral - Project Chief of NTNC's Biodiversity Conservation Centre, Nepal

ABM Sarowar Dipu – IUCN Bangladesh & BNVRC

### **SAVE Fundraising, Advocacy and Communications Committee (FACC)**

Ram Jakati (Chair) – Director Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (retd)

Homi Khusrookhan – President of BNHS India

Devendra Swarup – Director IVRI (retd) & NSAIDs & veterinary expert

BC Choudhury – Senior Scientist at Wildlife Institute of India (retd)

Uzma Khan – Director Biodiversity & Vulture head, WWF Pakistan

Nick Lindsay – Head of International Zoo Programmes, ZSL

Alex Hipkiss – International Funding Unit, RSPB (UK)

Anil Sharma – Principal Scientist & Incharge, Centre for Wildlife Conservation,  
Management & Disease Surveillance, IVRI

Enam Ul Haque – Founder Bangladesh Bird Club

Sarita Jnawali – National Trust for Nature Conservation, Nepal

Naiky Ny – BirdLife Cambodia

Chris Bowden – Globally Threatened Species Officer & Vulture Programme Manager, RSPB

The SAVE programme is coordinated by **Programme Manager** – Chris Bowden (see above)  
Email: [contact@save-vultures.org](mailto:contact@save-vultures.org)

**Website:** [www.save-vultures.org](http://www.save-vultures.org)

### **Further Background on SAVE**

The consortium originally of eleven (now 18) organisations was formally established in February 2011 under the banner ‘Saving Asia’s Vultures from Extinction (SAVE). These organisations have the common understanding to agree, prioritise and help implement the actions required to conserve three Critically Endangered resident *Gyps* vultures, based on sound scientific grounds.



