

**VULTURE NUMBERS ON THE RISE IN TAMIL NADU
VULTURE CENSUS**

Vulture census in Tamil Nadu has indicated that the number of vultures in the state is on the rise, as per the second synchronized vulture census undertaken by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department with participation of neighboring states of Kerala and Karnataka.

The first landscape synchronized population estimation was conducted on 25th and 26th February 2023, which estimated the total number of vultures as 246. This survey was carried out in the Mudhumalai Tiger Reserve and the adjoining landscape consisting of Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu, Wayanad in Kerala, Bandipur Tiger Reserve and Nagerhole Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. These have historically supported the vulture population.

The second synchronized survey was conducted in Tamil Nadu on 30th and 31st December 2023. This time Billigiri Ranganatha Swamy Temple Tiger Reserve, Karnataka and the entire state of Tamil Nadu were included in the survey.

During this survey, vantage point count methodology was adopted at 139 places. The survey was conducted in four sessions on two days for 8 hours, at all the 139 vantage points. This census indicated the presence of 320 vultures in the State.

Details are given below in the table.

Sl. No	Name of the Protected area	No.of vantage points	Number of individuals					Total
			White-rumped Vulture	Long billed Vulture	Red headed Vulture	Egyptian Vulture	Himalayan Vulture	
1	Mudumalai Tiger Reserve	20	63	9	6	0	0	78
2	Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve	16	35	25	10	0	0	70
3	Bandipur Tiger Reserve	42	57	3	5	0	0	65
4	Billigiri Ranganatha Swamy Temple Tiger Reserve	18	5	7	2	0	0	14
5	Nagerhole Tiger Reserve	15	26	1	11	0	0	38
6	Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary	18	31	2	16	0	2	51
7	Nellai Forest Division	10				4		4
	Total	139	217	47	50	4	2	320

In order to protect the last remaining breeding population of Vultures in south India the Government of Tamil Nadu under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister has set up a State Level Committee to take comprehensive measures for Vulture Conservation headed by the Chief Wildlife Warden. The State has also implemented the ban on Diclofenac medicine for cattle treatment through the Director of Drugs Control. This medicine is a major cause of decline in vulture population. Multiple raids were conducted at various places in Tamil Nadu and 104 manufacturers, sellers of multi-dose Diclofenac have been prosecuted for sale of the banned drug. Regular inspections of pharmacies are being done. Awareness campaign for pharmacists and veterinarians have been organised. After postmortem the carcass is now left for vultures.

In order to provide food for vulture, the Forest Department has decided to leave the carcass of wild animals after postmortem in the open as against the earlier practice of burying the carcass.

Several water holes have been created in vulture habitats under various schemes of Government.

Awareness programmes with local communities are also being done separately.

With these measures, Government of Tamil Nadu plans to bring back a viable population of vultures to maintain the ecological balance.

The vulture census team was led by the Chief Wildlife Warden Thiru. Srinivas R. Reddy, Deputy Director, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Thiru. Arun Kumar led the action on the ground. This census team also included Members of the State Board for Wildlife, Members of State level Committee for Vulture Conservation, NGOs, Experts, College students doing research on vultures and Independent researches and Birders from all over Tamil Nadu.

**Additional Chief Secretary to Government,
Environment, Climate Change & Forest Dept.**

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