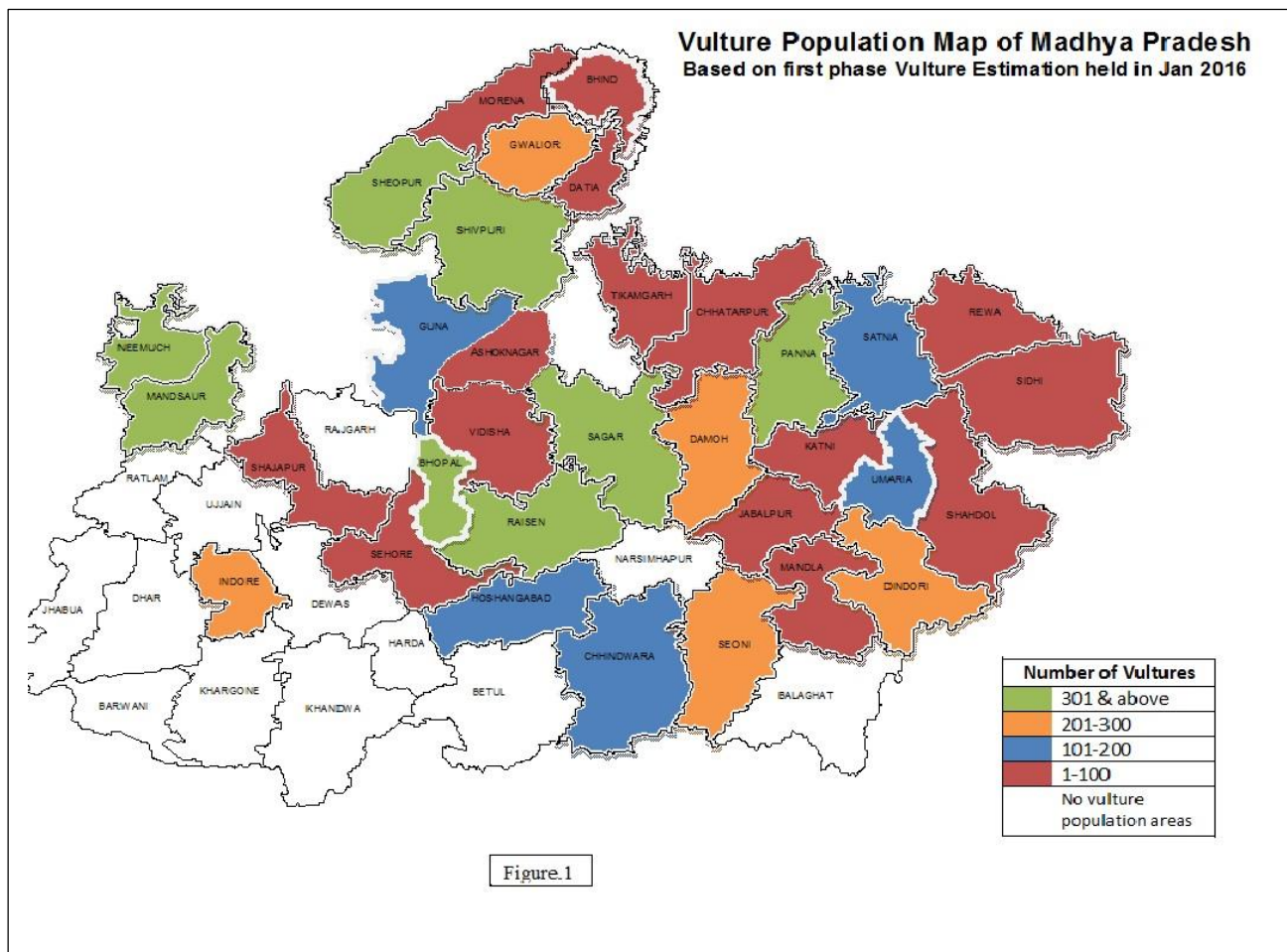


Vultures - our Friend

The vultures are human friendly birds and nature’s most efficient scavengers. They play very important role in our ecosystem. They are the primary removers of carrion in India and can finish off the carcass of an adult cattle in a few hours. Vultures constitute the natural animal disposal system and keep our environment clean. The decrease in Vulture population may result in an increase in population of rats and feral dogs (main scavenging species in the absence of vultures) and the spread of diseases. They also have historic and religious importance in India. Till the early 1990s, the population size of Gyps vultures in India and Nepal alone was estimated to be about 40 million (four crore). The number has declined to below one lakh at present – an astonishing drop of nearly 99.9% in just two decades (Source–BNHS). Such drastic decrease in population was notably due to use of Diclofenac a drug used to treat livestock which is toxic to vultures. The vultures die of kidney failure when they eat the carcass of an animal recently treated with this pain-killer, which is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).

For spreading awareness among the people every year first Saturday of September is celebrated as “International Vulture Awareness Day”. Recognizing the importance of Vultures the forest department of Madhya Pradesh in collaboration with Indian Institute of Forest Management organized a first of its kind Vulture Estimation in the State. In its first phase which was held on 23rd January 2016, about 6700 vultures were reported. The second phase is proposed in the month of May 2016. The project is being funded by MP State Biodiversity Board .

On the basis of first phase estimation, the presence of Vultures in Madhya Pradesh is depicted on a map. (Fig.1)



There are 23 species of vultures found in world out of which 9 species are found in India and 7 are found in Madhya Pradesh.

The species of residential vultures found in Madhya Pradesh are:

1- Indian Vulture/Long Billed Vulture



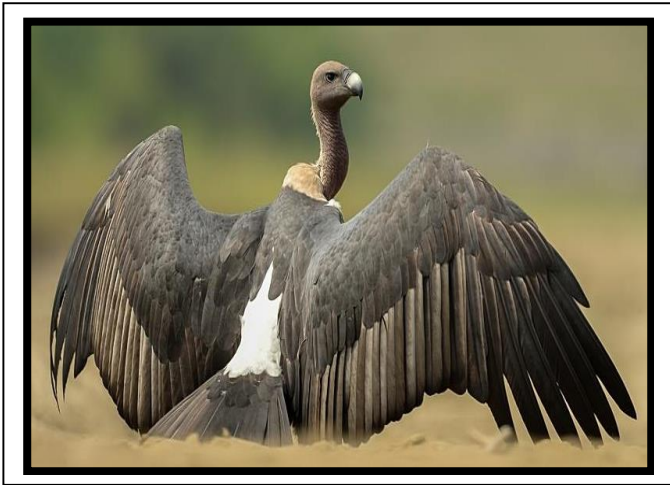
Name	Indian Vulture/Long Billed Vulture
Scientific Name	<i>Gyps indicus</i>
Body length	80-95 cm
IUCN status	Critically Endangered
Specific characteristic	Known for flying long distance and at very high altitude

2- Egyptian Vulture/ Scavenger Vulture-



Name	Egyptian Vulture
Scientific Name	<i>Neophron percropterus</i>
Body length	55-65cm
IUCN status	Endangered .
Specific characteristic	They also feed on small animals and egg of other birds, breaking them by tossing a large pebble onto them. (They use pebble as a hammer)

3 - White rumped Vulture/ White- backed Vulture/Oriental White backed Vulture-



Name	White rumped Vulture/ White- backed Vulture
Scientific Name	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>
Bodylength	75- 85 cm
IUCN status	Critically Endangered
Specific characteristic	Smallest one among all Gyps Species

4- King Vulture/Red headed Vulture



Name	King Vulture/Red headed Vulture
Scientific Name	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>
Body length	80-85cm
IUCN status	Critically Endangered
Specific characteristic	Incubation of eggs is carried out by female in night and by male in day

Madhya Pradesh Migratory Vulture –

There are three major species of Migratory Vultures seen in Madhya Pradesh .

5- Eurasian Griffon



Name	Eurasian Griffon
Scientific Name	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
Bodylength	95-105cm
IUCN status	Least Concern
Specific characteristic	Create growling sound at the time of eating carcass

6- Himalayan Griffon



Name	Himalayan Griffon/Himalayan Vulture
Scientific Name	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>
Bodylength	115-125 cm
IUCN status	Near Threatened
Specific characteristic	It is one of the largest and heaviest bird found in the Himalayas

7- Cinereous Vulture



Name	Cinereous Vulture
Scientific Name	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>
Bodylength	100- 110 cm
IUCN status	Near Threatened
Specific characteristic	Heaviest and largest among all raptors