

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE INDIGENOUS VULTURE MONITORING TRAINING  
WORKSHOP 10<sup>TH</sup> – 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2015**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of this training workshop was to build capacity in local people with skills in vulture identification and monitoring. Each participant trained during the workshop becomes an IVMP representative in their locality, providing monthly reports on vultures and their activities.

The following were discussed at the training workshop

- i. Importance of birds to man and the environment
- ii. How man has affected birds negatively
- iii. Vulture identification and monitoring techniques
- iv. Conservation biology principles in relation to IUCN
- v. IUCN status categories of Vultures
- vi. Avitourism and data collection approach
- vii. Field trips

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

The follows are some key objectives achieved:

- i. An online database system was developed by the workshop participants. This has moved the project a step faster in achieving its set objectives of creating a short-term baseline data on vulture population status in Ghana. This online database system is not complicated and is easy to access.
- ii. Data collection is already underway as IVMP representatives have started reporting vulture sightings and activities in their various localities.
- iii. Although we had no participants coming from Volta, Eastern, Upper West and Upper East Regions, few days after the workshop we had volunteers from these regions that have started work. We have plans to visit them and also do up 2 days training for those area.
- iv. Team members went on trips to conduct interviews to find out first-hand the perception of the local people about vultures, declines and threats. This is an extension of the project targeting up to 1000 people.

## **MEDIA COVERAGE**

During the week training two local FM stations Ahomka and Cape FM reported live from the opening ceremony programme and the Ghana Television (GTV) and GBC 24 broadcasted the ceremony at least twice in the week.

### **Some interesting findings so far**

From the workshop and encounter with local people so far we have identified some potential threats vultures may be facing. Some of these threats are quiet unique and perhaps peculiar to Ghana and West Africa only. The identified or reported threats are as follows:

- i. The use of old lorry tyres at abattoirs / slaughter houses to singe slaughtered animals
- ii. A unique poisoning pathway through bush meat hunting. Currently in Ghana hunters have resolved to use Furadan 4F-Urine concoction for hunting. They poison bait with this concoction and when animal (Grass-cutters) feed on poisoned bait they die. Hunters then remove the offal of the dead animals and dispose of them. When vulture eat these poisoned offal they may die. Almost all 100 people interviewed so far mentioned this.
- iii. It has been observed that there is a direct association between hooded vultures and *Ceiba pendandra*, the Silk cotton (*Onyina*) tree. The over exploitation of this tree for furniture and construction in recent times, it is possible that the drastic decline in the number of this tree positively corresponds to loss of breeding sites. A looming co-extinction hypothesis to be tested?
- iv. The use of vulture and their part for traditional medicine possess threat to vultures. On the local traditional market vulture parts (egg, head, feathers, legs) are very valuable and expensive. This has raised the interest of many traditional healers since the trade is lucrative and rewarding.

## **CHALLENGES**

Though the workshop was successful and met set objectives there were some challenges. The challenges encountered are:

- i. Reps from other regions that were not privileged to attend the workshop still need to be trained to allow a more representation.

- ii. Inability to incentivize workshop participant enough.
- iii. The workshop lasted a week contrary to the initial plan of two weeks. This was mainly due to high inflation and unstable prices of commodity. It would have been more expensive to host the workshop for two weeks since this would have affected our budget.

## **THE WAY FORWARD: INDIGENOUS VULTURE MONITORING PROJECT**

The IVMP team has plans to organize 1-3 day training workshop in those regions we did not have participants from. The immediate is the upcoming one-day vulture monitoring training seminar for South-Eastern Regions of Ghana (Volta & Eastern Regions). This is to be co-hosted by the Ho Polytechnic in the Volta Region. At this one day seminar participants will be trained in the skills of vulture identification and monitoring. This is aimed at building local capacity for vulture conservation. The prime focus is to identify potential representatives of the IVMP in areas where there are none and also create awareness in those regions. This workshop is targeted at Chiefs, Schools, Colleges, Political parties, Heads of institutions, Artisans and Traders in these regions.

### **Direction of the project**

Experiences from this workshop have led to the development of various projects we believe will complement efforts to saving vultures in Ghana.

- i. **Vulture Signage Project:** Putting details of vulture facts on bill boards at dumpsites, abattoirs, slaughter houses, schools and communities.
- ii. **Save the *Onyina* and save the vulture Project:** Investigate the relationship between vultures and the silk cotton tree and the over-exploitation of the tree that could lead to a policy change on the tree.
- iii. Threats identification and confirmation of the poisoning pathway in Ghana Project

## **CONCLUSION**

Although the number of days for the workshop was reduced, the workshop was successful. In the opinion of the organizers the competence at which participants grasped the concept and need for vulture conservation and the way they were able to implement monitoring and identification techniques in the field was remarkable. This suggests that participants are well equipped to carry out their mandate for vulture conservation in their local communities. Awareness creation had gone on great e.g. during the training workshop we had reports that 2 vultures had been killed.

Both incidents were reported by community members via phone calls. The cause of death of one was not known but one was killed by a reckless driver. Interestingly we received more than 21 calls on the accident. We least expected the Ghanaian to report on a dead vulture given how much they hated the live one. We are optimistic that gradually the perception of the Ghanaian is changing towards vultures and that efforts toward vulture conservation is steadily seeing light. We are hopeful that the project will yield quality results that will establish the status of vulture population and trends in threats to vultures in Ghana within the stipulated 12 month period.

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