

**"Strengthening Slender-billed Vulture Conservation: A Holistic Approach Using Telemetry, Community Participation, and Science-Based Feeding Site Management"**



**Grant: 49228-C**

**1<sup>st</sup> Update**

**To**

**Pokhara Bird Society and**

**Rufford Small Grant**

**The Rufford Foundation, UK**



## Introduction

Nepal has experienced a dramatic decline in vulture populations, with over 100 individuals from various species lost due to electrocution, carcass poisoning, and habitat loss (Dhakal et al. 2013; Dhakal et al. 2019, Dhakal et al. 2023, and Dhakal et al. 2025; Rasaili 2022; McClure et al. 2018; Ogada et al. 2012). From February 2010 to September 2019, more than 205 vultures of eight species (excluding Long-billed Vultures) were recorded dead due to poison bait. In 2021, a single poisoning event resulted in the deaths of 69 vultures—31 Himalayan, 35 White-rumped, one Slender-billed, and two Cinereous Vultures (Subedi et al. 2023), highlighting ongoing threats.

Despite the Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*) being the most critically endangered vulture species, ecological knowledge and targeted conservation efforts for the species remain lacking. There are critical gaps in understanding its movement, habitat use, and foraging range. Existing vulture feeding sites (“restaurants”) are often not based on scientific criteria, such as carrying capacity or proximity to nesting areas, which reduces their effectiveness. While Diclofenac has been banned, unsafe veterinary alternatives and informal practices continue to pose serious risks. This project will focus on the ecology of the Slender-billed Vulture to identify threats and recommend science-based conservation measures in Nepal and beyond. GPS telemetry, combined with field monitoring, will help determine key habitats and quantify threat levels over time, and the role of the Vulture safe feeding site in conservation.

Among 903 species of birds in Nepal, 9 species are the Vultures. All the 9 species vultures have been recorded from Pokhara. Seti river corridor is known to be famous for vultures. For the conservation of vultures, people’s participation is prime requirement. Local Stakeholders must be provided with education about Vulture’s ecological role in maintaining clean environment. The importance of big old trees in ecology must be shared with the locals so that they can protect and bring the tree plantation program. The negative superstitious beliefs among the locals regarding the vultures has to be cleared up meanwhile positive cultural and religious relation with humans should be highlighted that will encourage local stakeholders in conservation.

## Objectives

- Make people aware of the importance and status of vulture and increase public participation in Vulture Conservation.
- To understand the movement and breeding ecology of SBV through scientific approaches.



## Updates

### A. October -November 2025

#### A.1. Permit and Permission:

Permission for Research and monitoring was received from the department of Government concerned. Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and Forest Department have already granted the permit for tagging 10 individuals of vultures, species- Slender-billed Vultures.

Similarly, a permission for the use of grants from foreign funding organizations was also granted from Social Welfare Council of Nepal and the fund was released to the account of Pokhara Bird Society supported by The Rufford Foundation.

All this work took around one month. All the offices concerned are at Kathmandu, Nepal.

#### A.2. Preliminary site visit:

We visited Vulture Safe Feeding sites at Ghachowk and Nawalpur and had a short conversation with the representatives from communities supporting and managing Vulture Safe Feeding sites in those places. We also concluded our visit by developing some understanding of promoting bird tourism through special training to local young leaders in the communities. My supervisors from University of Oviedo (Professor. Patricia Mateo T. and Professor. Jose), President of Pokhara Bird Society and two volunteers from Pokhara Bird Society visited those sites. Krishna Prasad Bhusal and Deu Bdr. Rana other Rufford Grantee also were together at Vulture safe Feeding Site Ghachowk, Kaski.



Ghachowk



Nawalpur

### A.3. Vulture Rescue:



Vulture rescued



Vulture submitted to Rehabilitation center

A Slender-billed Vulture sub-adult was injured and was chased by crows. I received a phone call from Ghachowk. After reaching there I called rescue team and consulted a Vet Partitioner/ Vet Doc for its preliminary treatment. Since vulture seem to not be injured from outside, we waited for rescued team to arrive and handed them for its further treatment. Manish Pokharel local young student and my wife help me to rescue this vulture. 2<sup>nd</sup> Picture reflected my visit to rescue center. Vulture is fine and healthy and now shifted to next cage. According to the Pachabhaiya rehabilitation Center Soon they will release it back to nature.

### A.4. 1<sup>st</sup> Nepal Vulture Symposium:

Himali Anusandhan Kendra, Bird Conservation Nepal and Pokhara Bird Society, jointly organized, 1<sup>st</sup> Nepal Vulture Symposium 2025 in Pokhara. The program was from November 6 and 7, 2025.



<https://pokharabirdsociety.org/national-vulture-symposium-2025-held-in-pokhara/>

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The Vulture Symposium, held on November 6 and 7, 2025, at the Rhudrakchya Hotel, Lakeside, Pokhara, was an impactful event that gathered conservationists, researchers, and experts to discuss the pressing need for vulture conservation. Organized jointly by the Pokhara Bird Society, Bird Conservation Nepal, and Himali Anusandhan Kendra, and supported by The Rufford Foundation, the symposium successfully raised awareness about the vital ecological role vultures play and the threats they face.

The program was chaired by Manshanta Ghimire, the President of the Pokhara Bird Society, who opened the event and facilitated the proceedings. The inaugural address was delivered by Mohan Raj Kafle, the Province Secretary of the Ministry of Forest and Environment, Gandaki Province, Nepal. In his speech, Secretary Kafle highlighted the significance of vultures in maintaining a balanced ecosystem, particularly their role in preventing the spread of diseases by disposing of carcasses.

The symposium featured 4 keynote speakers, each offering valuable insights into the challenges and solutions related to vulture conservation. These included Professor Patricia from the University of Oviedo, Spain, and Professor Jose from the Biodiversity Research Institute, Spain, who provided expertise on vulture conservation strategies in Europe and the ongoing threats facing these birds globally.

A total of 29 papers were presented throughout the two-day event, covering a wide range of topics from vulture biology and behavior to conservation strategies and the impact of human activities on their populations. The sessions were interactive, with engaging discussions and questions from the audience, creating an opportunity for knowledge exchange between international experts, local conservationists, and students.

In addition to the international experts, Dr. Rajan Poudel from the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, Dr. Kisan Koirala, Exam Controller at Gandaki University, and representatives from the Division Forest Office, Kaski, spoke about the local challenges and conservation efforts being implemented in Nepal. They emphasized the importance of involving local communities, education, and research in sustainable conservation efforts.

The event also featured interactive sessions where participants were encouraged to discuss ideas and strategies to tackle the issues facing vultures, such as poisoning from veterinary drugs, habitat destruction, and the importance of stricter regulations to protect these endangered species.

The symposium concluded with a vote of thanks, acknowledging the contributions of all speakers, organizers, and participants. The event was widely praised for its comprehensive discussions and for fostering a sense of collective responsibility among all attendees to contribute to vulture conservation. There was total 76 participants in the program.

I participated in the program and presented by previous Rufford funded Projects outputs and its importance. I presented a paper entitled, “Data-Driven Approaches to wintering Vulture Population Monitoring in Nepal Using Mobile Applications in Nepal (2024-2025).”



## **B. December 2025**

### **B.1. Vulture Awareness Campaign:**

One day Vulture Awareness campaign was conducted at Pokhara Metropolitan city ward- 33 in a public area under a Banayan tree. The program was hosted by Mr. Hari Prasad Poudel who is a chairperson of Machhapuchhre Tole Sudhar Samiti. Mr. Bishnu Parsad Poudel, the chairperson of Baladevi Tole Sudhar Samiti chaired the program while the Mr. Ramchandra Adhikari, the ward chairperson of Pokhara Metropolitan city ward-33 was the chief guest in the program. President of Pokhara Birds Society Mr. Manshant Ghimire, President of Baladevi Aama Samuha Mrs. Rishimaya Lamichhane, Samaj Sudhar Aama Samuha Mrs. Kalpana Lamichhane, Chairperson of Thuldhunga Ban Upabhokta Samiti Mr. Suryalal Poudel and Ward members of Pokhara-33 Mr. Durga K.C. Thapa, Mrs. Lila Nepali, Mr. Prakash Karki and Mr. Binod Babu Bhandari were present as the guest. A journalist from Nepal Television and a newspaper journalist also participated as guest in the program.



The program commenced at 8:45 am with opening remarks by the host, Mr. Hari Prasad Poudel. He invited Mr. Hemanta Dhakal to deliver a keynote speech on the theme of the program. Mr. Dhakal highlighted the status and ecological importance of vultures in Nepal, explaining their population decline due to the use of diclofenac in livestock and the positive impacts following its ban in 2006. He emphasized the importance of protecting nesting and roosting trees, shared his vision for awareness campaigns, and discussed the status, nesting sites, and research significance of the Slender-billed Vulture in the area.

Guest speaker Mr. Manshanta Ghimire spoke about vultures' preference for large trees and shared insights from conservation and advocacy efforts. He also noted that potential risks related to Pokhara Regional International Airport had been predicted prior to its construction but were not adequately addressed.

The chief guest, Ward Chairperson Mr. Ramchandra Adhikari, expressed appreciation for the program, noting it was the first of its kind in the locality. He committed to protecting the nesting tree and supporting future conservation initiatives, thanking Pokhara Bird Society, Mr. Hemanta Dhakal, and local community groups for organizing the event.

The program concluded with closing remarks by Chairperson Mr. Bishnu Prasad Poudel, followed by an informal tea session and further discussions on declaring a bird for Ward-33.

The awareness program aimed at promoting conservation of the flagship species, the Slender-billed Vulture, was successfully conducted in Thuldhunga, Pokhara-33, in the presence of the ward chairperson and other local representatives. The program was organized by the local union with technical support from the Pokhara Bird Society.

The event proved highly effective for conservation, as community members actively participated in discussions and shared their views and concerns. Participants expressed strong interest in protecting the species and committed to conserving important nesting trees that play a vital role in its survival.

The program concluded with a mutual understanding that the local government and community members will support the monitoring of the Slender-billed Vulture nest in the area. This will be achieved through the installation of a camera on the rooftop of a nearby local house facing the nesting tree, where the species has recently begun nesting again. Few locals are guided to monitor vulture movement and its nest. Villagers are now excited to be a part of vulture conservation.

A camera was installed near nest to monitor nesting activity of SBV and became the headline news in Kantipur National Daily and Kathmandu Post.

<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/12/25/cctv-camera-monitors-critically-endangered-vultures-in-kaski>

<https://ekantipur.com/news/2025/12/25/en/cctv-footage-of-a-vultures-nest-12-49.html>



## B.2. Vulture Population monitoring and Nest Monitoring

Following the workshop, regular vulture population monitoring was conducted using the Wing Watchers platform. Trained participants carried out systematic surveys in known vulture habitats and flight corridors.

Key activities included:

- Recording species-wise vulture counts
- Uploading real-time observations to Wing Watchers
- Monitoring seasonal movement patterns
- Identifying potential threats such as poisoning, habitat disturbance, and food scarcity

This continuous monitoring contributed to building a reliable dataset on the current status and distribution of Slender-billed Vultures in Nepal.



Our team in Conservation, Pokhara Bird Society Team

### #Nest Monitoring

Nest monitoring was a core component of the project to understand breeding success and nesting threats.

- Two students were officially appointed and trained to monitor active vulture nests in Pokhara and Shuklaphanta.
- These students conducted regular nest visits to record nesting behavior of SBV.

In addition, one more student is in the process of being selected to initiate nest monitoring in Dang District, which is an important potential breeding area for Slender-billed Vultures.

This student-based monitoring approach helped build local conservation capacity while ensuring continuous field presence at nesting sites.



SBV in nest captured by live Camera at night