Title

BirdLife Partners around the world have joined with raptor conservation and research organisations to celebrate International Vulture Awareness Day, with events and awareness raising taking place.This comes against a backdrop of problems facing vultures in Africa and Asia. Vultures are an ecologically vital group of birds that face a range of threats in many areas that they occur. Populations of many species are under pressure and some species are facing extinction. International Vulture Awareness Day, which took place on 1st September provides a way to remind people of their plight and their importance. Vultures fulfil an extremely important ecological role. They keep the environment free of carcasses and waste, restrict the spread of diseases such as anthrax and botulism, and help control numbers of pests such as rats and feral dogs by reducing the food available to them. They are of cultural value to communities in Africa and Asia, and have important eco-tourism value. However, vulture populations are in steep decline across the globe. In the Indian subcontinent, populations of three formerly very common species of vulture have declined by more than 97% as a result of consuming cattle carcasses contaminated with the veterinary drug diclofenac. In 2006, the governments of India, Pakistan and Nepal finally introduced a ban on the manufacture of diclofenac and pharmaceutical firms are now encouraged to promote an alternative drug, meloxicam, which is proven to be safe for vultures. The manufacturing ban has had some success in reducing the drug's prevalence. Unfortunately, there is still no ban on the sale or use of the drug and the overall trend across South Asia remains one of continuing vulture declines. In East Africa there have been mass vulture deaths associated with misuse of chemicals, huge population declines in West Africa due to habitat loss, and the disappearance of vultures from large areas of their formers ranges in South Africa because of the continued use of vulture parts in traditional medicine and sorcery. Other threats include power line collisions and electrocutions, disturbance at breeding sites, drowning in farm reservoirs, direct persecution and declining food availability. Watch the video to find out more Find out more about International Vulture Awareness Day Find out more about BirdLife's work on threatened species