



## NOTES ON NATURAL HISTORY

# Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) in Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary, Thiruvarur District, Tamil Nadu: a First record

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Study Area: Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary, India  
Coordinated: 10°26'59"N 79°27'58"E

Keywords: Wetland, First sight

### Introduction:

The Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) from the family Accipitridae, is listed in the endangered category of the IUCN due to its range and population. The vulture is mainly found in savanna, shrubland, grassland, wetlands, rocky areas (Cliffs and mountain peaks) in Asia, Africa and Europe (IUCN, 2020). The populations of the species have dramatically declined in recent years (BirdLife International, 2020). The vulture is a scavenger and feeds on domestic livestock carcasses, wild animals, and human food waste (Milchev *et al.*, 2012). The species is declining in virtually all parts of its range, apparently for a number of different reasons that include, disturbance, lead poisoning (from ammunition used in hunting game), direct and secondary poisoning, electrocution, collisions with wind turbines, reduced food availability and habitat change are currently impacting upon European populations (Donázar *et al.*, 2002, 2016; Kurtev *et al.*, 2008; Zuberogoitia *et al.*, 2008; Carrete *et al.*, 2009; Dzhamirzoev & Bukreev 2009; Sara *et al.*, 2009; Angelov *et al.*, 2013; Mateo-Tomás & Olea 2015; Veleviski *et al.*, 2015).

### Observation from Thiruvarur District:

Udhayamarthandapuram bird sanctuary is a protected area in Tiruvarur District, Tamil Nadu, India. The common wetland birds from the sanctuary include Black-headed Ibis, Asian Openbill, Grey Heron, Black-crowned night Heron, Cormorants and Oriental Darter. On 13th March 2020, during the field visit organized to the sanctuary for the participants of MoEFCC, Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) on Bird Identification and Basic Ornithology, we observed two vultures with bald yellow head and throat, creamy white plumage and black wing coverts inside the sanctuary. We recorded one bird flying over the canopy and another one sitting on the Asian Openbill nest, both the birds were photographed and identified using the field guide Grimmett *et al.* (2011) as Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) (Plate-1). Later, this first sighting was also updated on the e-bird checklist

Table 1: Egyptian Vulture sighting reported in few Districts of Tamil Nadu

#	Year	Mon	Name of the Place	Districts	T*
1	1972	Jan	Thirupullani	Ramanathapuram	1
2	1972	Dec	Mudumalai National Park	The Nilgiris	1
3	1974	Dec	Mahabalipuram	Kanchipuram	1
4	1978	Sep	Sevapur Kadavur	Karur	x
5	1980	Mar	Mahabalipuram	Kanchipuram	1
6	1981	Jul	Srivilliputhur	Virudunagar	x
7	1982	Dec	Chidambaram	Cuddalore	1
8	1982	Dec	Pichavaram Mangrove Forest	Cuddalore	1
9	1983	Nov	Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary	Kanchipuram	3
10	1985	Jan	Amirthi Reserve Forest	Vellore	2
11	1986	Apr	Kalpakkam	Kanchipuram	1
12	1992	Aug	Karai Lake	Kanchipuram	1
13	1994	Jan	Gingee Fort	Villupuram	1
14	1994	Apr	Kattakamanpatti	Theni	2
15	1996	Aug	Mudumalai National Park	The Nilgiris	1
16	1997	Dec	Kundukottai	Krishnagiri	1
17	2013	May	Nanguneri	Tirunelveli	2
18	2014	Jan	Vallanadu Black Buck Sanctuary	Thoothukudi	2
19	2015	Jan	Masinagudi	The Nilgiris	1
20	2015	Feb	Bokhapuram	The Nilgiris	4
21	2015	Jun	Vagaikulam	Thoothukudi	2
22	2016	Jan	Stanmore, Valparai	Coimbatore	1
23	2016	Jan	Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary	Tirunelveli	1
24	2016	Jan	Nanguneri	Tirunelveli	1
25	2016	Feb	Masinagudi	The Nilgiris	3
26	2016	Nov	Bokhapuram	The Nilgiris	1
27	2016	Nov	Pallikaranai Marsh	Chennai	1
28	2016	Oct	Pothaiyadi	Tirunelveli	1
29	2016	Nov	Pothaiyadi	Tirunelveli	1
30	2017	Jan	Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary	Tirunelveli	4
31	2017	Nov	Vallanadu Black Buck Sanctuary	Thoothukudi	1
32	2018	Dec	Manchikondapuram	Krishnagiri	1
33	2018	Dec	Kannakurichi Lake	Salem	1
34	2019	Dec	Thoothukudi	Thoothukudi	1
35	2020	Jan	SAC Women's College, Cumbum	Theni	1
36	2020	Jan	Vaagaikulam Srivaikuntam	Thoothukudi	3
37	2020	Mar	Udhayamarthandapuram Bird San.	Tiruvarur	2

T\*:- total number of birds seen, x = No mention of bird count, Source: Compiled from e-bird checklist.

for Tiruvarur District.

The sighting of the Egyptian vulture in Tamil Nadu is very rare and the e-bird checklist has listed the sighting records for only sixteen districts. Our observation of

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Plate-1: Egyptian Vulture sitting in the Asian Openbill nest

Egyptian vulture in Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary is the first record from Tiruvarur District, Tamil Nadu. To validate our observation, we referred to the data from the e-bird web portal that has the list of Egyptian vulture sightings by naturalist since 1972. We compiled the data from 37 observations (including our observation) spreads across 16 districts in Tamil Nadu (Table-1; Fig.-1) with maximum vulture sighting in the month of January (Fig.-2) and overall maximum sightings recorded in Tirunelveli District. Further, we also compared our observation with the available published literature and did not find any data on the sighting of the Egyptian Vulture from Tiruvarur District. Hence, our observation in Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary is the first record for the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) for the Tiruvarur district of Tamil Nadu.

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Figure-1: Map showing the Egyptian Vulture sighting records from Tamil Nadu.

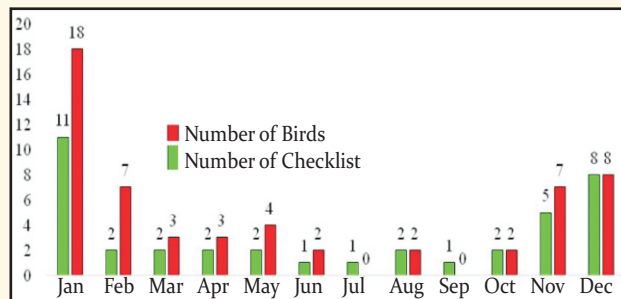


Figure-2: Monthly variations in the sighting of Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) along with the e-bird checklist from Tamil Nadu

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[www.Birdlife.org](http://www.Birdlife.org); [www.IUCN.org](http://www.IUCN.org)