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Long-billed Vulture

The population of the long-billed vulture has seen a steady increase between 2015 and 2021, with the species exhibiting a 74% breeding success rate in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR).

- It is a medium-sized bird of prey (any bird that pursues other animals for food) native to the Indian subcontinent.
- **Scientific Name** - Gyps Indicus.
- **Family** - Accipitridae.
- It is also known as the Indian vulture, Indian Griffon.
- **Appearance** - It features a light brown body with a dark head and neck, and it has a pale bill and collar that is more prominent behind the neck.
- It is similar to Slender-billed Vulture, but Indian Vultures are not as lanky and have a paler bill and very tiny ear holes.



- **Distribution** - Found in India and South East Pakistan.
- **Natural habitat** - Found in cities, towns and villages near cultivated area and open woody areas.
- **Diet** - Long-billed Vulture feeds exclusively on carrion, and mainly remains of cattle.
- **Breeding season** - November to March. Female lays one single whitish egg.
- **Nesting** - Nests in small colonies usually on cliffs. Nests are enormous and constructed with the help of sticks and lined with green leaves and rubbish. Both adults share the nesting duties.
- **Conservation status**
 - **IUCN** - Critically endangered.
 - **CITES** - Appendix II.
 - **WPA, 1972** - Schedule 1.
- **Threats**

- Forest fires
- The use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, like diclofenac, in treating cattle, and
- Farmers indulging in retaliatory poisoning of tigers and leopards that occasionally prey on domestic cattle.

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

- Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) is located in the Nilgiri District of Tamil Nadu.
- It is at the tri-junction of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- The Tiger Reserve comprises of the wildlife sanctuary and the national park of the same name.
- It forms a part of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve.
- It has a common boundary with Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) on the West, Bandipur Tiger Reserve (Karnataka) on the North.
- The Moyar River flows downstream into the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and is the natural line of division between Mudumalai and Bandipur Sanctuary.
- Other 2 vulture species observed in the reserve are the white rumped vulture and Asian king vulture.

Reference


[The Hindu | Long-billed vulture's nesting success rate](#)

Diphtheria


A 3-year-old girl died of suspected diphtheria in Punjab's Faridkot recently.

- Diphtheria is a **highly contagious** but preventable bacterial disease.
- A toxin produced by some strains of the ***Corynebacterium diphtheria*** bacteria results in diphtheria.
- **Types** - There are 2 types of diphtheria - respiratory and cutaneous.
 - Respiratory diphtheria affects the nose, throat, and tonsils, while cutaneous diphtheria affects the skin.
- **Transmission** - It is spread through the air or by contact with an infected person.
- It affects the respiratory tract and spreads throughout the body.
- **Symptoms** - Fever, chills, swelling in lymph nodes, fatigue, shortness of breath, etc.
- **Prevention** - Immunisation is the best prevention against it, with the full schedule requiring seven doses between 0-16 years.
- Three doses are given before the child turns one, a booster Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) shot when the child is two, a fifth dose when the child turns six, and one each in years 10 and 16.

People of all ages need DIPHtheria VACCINES



DTaP for young children	Tdap for preteens	Td or Tdap for adults
✓ 2, 4, and 6 months ✓ 15 through 18 months ✓ 4 through 6 years	✓ 11 through 12 years	✓ Every 10 years

www.cdc.gov/diphtheria 

According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 93.5% of Indian children in the one-year age bracket were immunised in 2023-24 while Punjab's numbers stood at 93.96%.

- **Treatment**

- **Respiratory diphtheria** - Treatment usually involves diphtheria antitoxin and antibiotics.
- **Skin infections** - Generally, only antibiotics are used.

- **Prevalence** - Data from 2023-24 states that almost 84% of diphtheria cases in India were reported from 10 states

- Kerala, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Nagaland, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal.

Reference

[The Indian Express | Suspected diphtheria death in Punjab](#)

Rufous-tailed rock thrush

The female Rufous-tailed rock thrush was recently spotted in Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary could be a passage migrant to Africa.

- It is a distinctive, small, short-tailed thrush-like bird.
- **Scientific Name** - *Monticola saxatilis*.
- **Family** - Muscicapidae.
- It is known as Common rock thrush.
- **Appearance**
 - Males are strikingly beautiful with bright blue-gray head, white back patch, and chestnut underparts.
 - Females are reddish-brown and have a scaly appearance, with a tail pattern similar to males.

- **Distribution** - Europe, northwestern Africa, and parts of Asia
- **Breeding** - Breeds on rocky mountain slopes and alpine meadows, usually above 1,500 m (5,000 ft).
- **Migration** - It migrates to Africa during the non-breeding season.
- **Diet** - It is omnivorous, eating a wide range of insects, berries and small reptiles.
- **Behavior** - Usually shy but may be obvious when delivering its melodic Eurasian Blackbird-like song in flight. The male common rock thrush has a clear and tuneful song.
- **Conservation status**
 - IUCN - Least Concern
- **Threats** - Habitat loss and degradation and indiscriminate shooting.



Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary

- The sanctuary is widely known to be a tiger reserve and is known to be a wildlife corridor
- **Declared in** - 2008.
- **Rivers** - 7 rivers have their origin in this forest including the famous Pahrli and Thamirabarani rivers.
- **Vegetation** - Southern thorn forests, dry deciduous, moist deciduous, semi evergreen forests and ever green hill sholas with grassy downs.
- **Fauna** - Indian Bison, Elephant, Nilgiri Tahr, Sambar Deer, Lion-tailed Macaque and also reptiles such as Indian Rock Python.
- **Other spotted birds** - Persian shearwater (*Puffinus persicus*) and Willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*).

Reference

[The Hindu | Rufous-tailed rock thrush](#)

Korean Peninsula

North Korea has adopted a renewed aggressive stance in the face of tensions with its neighbour, South Korea.

- The Korean Peninsula is a peninsula in **East Asia** that is made up of the Korean mainland and more than 3,960 nearby islands.
- It's located between **China and Japan**.
- It is bordered by the Yellow Sea to the west, the East China Sea and Korea Strait to the south, and the East Sea to the east.
- The Yalu and Tumen rivers form the border between North Korea and China.
- Japan is located just east of the Korean Peninsula across the Korean Strait.
- The highest peak in North Korea rises more than nine thousand feet.
- The Korean Peninsula is politically divided into North Korea and South Korea, with each country claiming sovereignty over the entire region
 - **North Korea**, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) with its capital **Pyongyang**.
 - **South Korea**, also known as the Republic of Korea (ROK) with its capital **Seoul**.
- The two countries fought the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. These countries have been separated by the **Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ)** since 1953.
- Approximately 70 percent of the Korean Peninsula is mountainous.
- The Korean Peninsula is known for its dolmens, which are large rocks that were erected over thousands of years.
- Many dolmens can be found across the Korean Peninsula, and some have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites.



Reference

[The Indian Express | Korean Peninsula](#)

International Abhidhamma Divas

Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) celebrated the International Abhidhamma Divas (October 17) recently in New Delhi.

- Abhidhamma Divas commemorates Lord Buddha's descent from the celestial realm after delivering his teachings on the Abhidhamma, a core component of Buddhist philosophy.
- Lord Buddha descended from the celestial realm, *Tavatimsa-devaloka*, to *Sankassiya* (now Sankisa Basantapur) in Uttar Pradesh.
- The Asokan Elephant Pillar, a historical marker at the site, marks this significant event.

The Ashokan Elephant Pillar is a 3rd century BCE artifact in Sankissa, Uttar Pradesh built by Emperor Ashoka the Great. It has a unique capital with 4 elephants standing back-to-back, supporting a circular abacus.

- According to ***Theravada Buddhist texts***, Lord Buddha spent 3 months teaching the

Abhidhamma to the deities in Tavatimsa, including his mother.

- **Abhidhamma Pinaka** - Later he conveyed these teachings to his disciple Sariputta, who expanded upon them in the 6 core books of the **Abhidhamma Pinaka**.
- These texts cover various topics, such as moral and mental states, aggregates, causal relationships, and the path to emancipation, understanding the mind and achieving spiritual growth.
- The 7 treatises of the Abhidhamma Pinaka, notably the Pannhana, delve into causal relations with unparalleled depth, showcasing the Buddha's profound insight.
- The celebration of Abhidhamma Divas coincides with the end of the first Rainy Retreat (Vassa) and the Pavaraṇa festival, a time when monks and nuns conclude their retreat period with a ceremony.
- The Abhidhamma, or "Higher Teaching" of the Buddha, provides a profound and systematic analysis of mind and matter.
- Unlike the more conventional teachings in the Sutta Piṭaka, which use everyday language, the Abhidhamma adopts a specialized and analytical approach to explore reality.
- It offers a detailed framework for understanding the nature of existence, addressing the processes of birth, death, and mental phenomena in a precise and abstract manner.
- **Vocabulary** - To convey these intricate concepts, the Abhidhamma developed a specialized **vocabulary in Pali**, forming the basis of Buddhist philosophy and psychology.
- **Key terms** - "citta" (consciousness), "cetasika" (mental factors), "rupa" (materiality), and "nibbana" (final liberation).
- The meticulous analysis provided by these texts has made the Abhidhamma an essential tool for practitioners seeking to develop insight and grasp the essence of Buddha's teachings.

Significance of Pali

- Pali was recently recognized as having a **classical language status**.
- The entire body of Buddhist canonical literature is written in Pali, with the Tipitaka or "Threefold Basket" being its most notable collection.
- This includes the
 - Vinaya Pitaka, which outlines ethical monastic rules,
 - Sutta Pitaka, a rich compilation of the Buddha's discourses, and
 - Abhidhamma Pitaka, which delves into ethics, psychology, and the intricate analysis of mind and reality.
- A rich commentarial tradition has developed around these texts, with works such as the **Atthasalini and Sammohavinodani** being crucial for understanding the nuanced teachings of the Abhidhamma.
- Moreover, Pali literature encompasses the **Jataka Kathas**, which recount the stories of the Buddha's previous lives, reflecting shared moral values prevalent among the Indian populace.

Reference

[PIB | International Abhidhamma Divas](#)



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