

Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary, List of Vultures, Flora, Fauna

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Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary is a landmark Conservation Site in India. It is known for protecting some of the most threatened vulture species. It has gained national attention due to rare sightings and consistent breeding success of critically endangered vultures. The sanctuary reflects the impact of focused, protected area based conservation after India witnessed a drastic vulture population collapse since the 1990s. The decline of Vultures up to 99% was mainly due to the veterinary diclofenac poisoning which made urgent intervention necessary. Ramadevara Betta stands out as a recovery site, proving that habitat protection, regulated zones and species focused management can help revive ecologically vital scavenger birds.

Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary

Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary is situated in the Ramadevara Betta Hill Range of Ramanagara district, Karnataka. The sanctuary was established in 2012 as the first and only sanctuary dedicated exclusively to Vulture Conservation in India. The sanctuary covers about 3.46 square kilometres and was declared an Eco-Sensitive Zone in 2017, extending up to 1.80 kilometres from its boundary across 7.08 square kilometres. Its rocky cliffs and open landscapes provide ideal nesting and roosting conditions. The sanctuary's recent success in breeding long-billed vultures for four consecutive years highlights its role as a critical refuge amid widespread habitat loss and

ecological pressures.

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Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary List of Vultures

The Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary supports three vulture species, each playing a vital ecological role in carcass disposal and disease control, reflecting targeted conservation success.

- **Indian Long-Billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*):** A medium sized scavenger native to India, Pakistan and Nepal, this species prefers open landscapes near human settlements and suffered a 97% to 99% decline due to diclofenac poisoning, leading to its Critically Endangered IUCN status.
- **Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*):** A smaller vulture species known for adaptability and scavenging versatility, it has been regularly sighted at Ramadevara Betta, with recent observations recording nearly 50 individuals, indicating local habitat suitability despite national level population stress.
- **White-Backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*):** Once one of the most common vultures in India, this species experienced catastrophic declines due to toxic veterinary drugs and is now endangered, surviving in limited numbers within protected landscapes like Ramadevara Betta.

Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary Biodiversity

The Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary supports diverse dry and moist forest vegetation and wildlife, creating a stable ecological base for vultures and other species.

Flora

- **Dry Deciduous Forests:** Tree species such as *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Terminalia tomentosa*, *Terminalia arjuna* and *Schleichera oleosa* dominate the landscape, providing perching sites and maintaining prey and carcass availability through livestock dependent ecosystems.
- **Thorny Scrub Vegetation:** Areas with *Grewia tilaefolia*, *Shorea talura*, sandalwood (*Santalum album*) and amla (*Emblica officinalis*) support insects, small mammals and birds, strengthening the food chain around vulture habitats.
- **Moist Deciduous Patches:** Species like *Vitex altissima* occur in sheltered zones, improving vegetation diversity and microhabitats within the sanctuary's limited geographical area.

Fauna

- **Mammals:** The sanctuary supports leopards, sloth bears, wild boars, golden jackals, spotted deer, barking deer, bonnet macaques and Indian crested porcupines, indicating a relatively intact food web.
- **Reptiles and Amphibians:** Lizards, snakes, frogs and toads are commonly recorded, contributing to ecosystem balance and reflecting healthy habitat conditions.
- **Avifaunal and Invertebrate Diversity:** Beyond vultures, the area hosts bats, butterflies, bees, spiders and various bird species, enhancing pollination, nutrient cycling and ecological resilience.

Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary Challenges

Despite conservation success, the Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary faces persistent ecological and human induced pressures that require careful management.

- **Veterinary Drug:** Although diclofenac use has been banned, historical exposure caused irreversible population losses and strict monitoring is still required to prevent illegal or accidental reintroduction through livestock treatment.
- **Human Disturbance:** Tourist activities to the Ramadevara Hill, along with trekking, climbing and biking, disturb nesting cliffs and breeding sites, directly affecting raptor reproductive success.
- **Industrial and Mining Pressure:** Rapid industrialisation and quarrying threats in surrounding areas necessitated the Eco-Sensitive Zone notification to prevent habitat fragmentation and noise pollution.
- **Limited Population Base:** With very small breeding populations, especially of long-billed vultures, even minor disturbances or mortality events can significantly affect long term recovery prospects.
- **Dependence on Safe Food Availability:** Vultures rely on uncontaminated carcasses, making continued regulation of livestock waste disposal and veterinary practices critical for sustained conservation outcomes.

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