



Technical Report of Vulture Safe Zone, Assam 2022-23



VISION:

Premier independent scientific organisation with
a broad-based constituency, excelling in the
conservation of threatened species and habitats

MISSION:

Conservation of nature, primarily biological diversity,
through action based on research, education and
public awareness

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Technical Report of Vulture Safe Zone, Assam 2022-23

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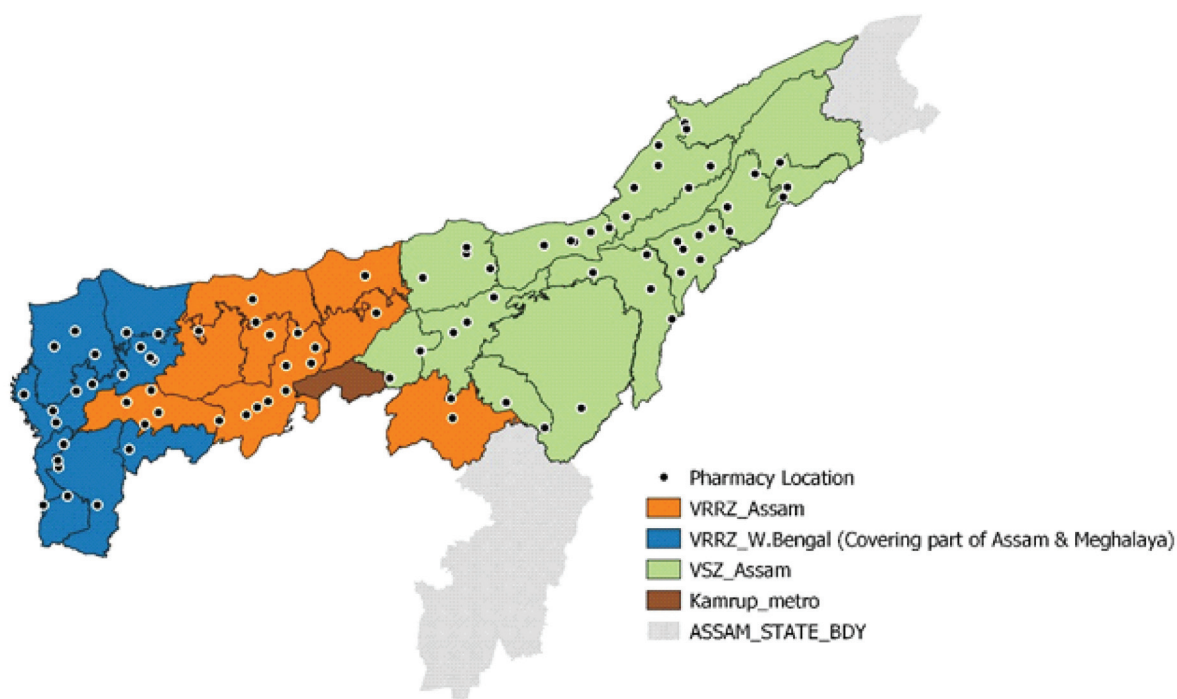
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Location:

14 districts of Assam (Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, Golaghat, Karbi- Anglong, Nagaon, Morigaon, Sonitpur, Bishwanath, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Majuli, Dibrugarh and Kamrup).

Additionally, Northwest zone of Meghalaya (East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, South-West Garo Hills), six districts of western Assam (Goalpara, Chirang, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Dhuburi, and South Salmara-Mankachar) and seven districts for central Assam (Darrang, Udalguri, Kamrup Rural, Barpeta, Nalbari, Baksa, West Karbi Anglong) were covered during pharmacy surveys and awareness meetings.

Pharmacies under surveillance



Work carried out:

- Targeted awareness and advocacy to create a safe zone for vulture
- Pharmacy surveys (under cover survey and open surveys)
- Surveys of vulture populations, other scavengers and food availability for vultures by road transects and road counts
- Nest monitoring at Demow, Sivasagar. Nest survey in Vulture Safe zone as well as in Vulture Release Zone

Awareness and advocacy Programs:

Veterinary sector:

Awareness programs were carried out in the eleven Veterinary dispensaries, addressing 444 veterinarians and paravets

Sr No	Meeting Date	Place	No of People
1	14-12-2022	Kochpara State Dispensary, Mirza Assam	37
2	29-12-2022	Chaygaon	40
3	02-02-2023	Sibsagar	40
4	13-02-2023	Boko Veterinary	20
5	01-03-2023	Dhemaji	30
6	03-03-2023	Nalbari	20
7	09-03-2023	DVO Udalguri	16
8	10-03-2023	DVO Morigaon	56
9	14-03-2023	DVO Sonitpur	124
10	29-03-2023	DVO Majuli	20
11	29-03-2023	DVO South Salmara-Mankachar	41



Awareness program at Veterinary facility Boko, Kamrup district

Educational institutions:

Awareness programs in eighteen school–colleges were carried out, addressing about 2,000 students, parents and teachers. Student batches of 8th to 10th standards in schools and biology students of colleges were selected for the lectures and workshops. Presentation and documentary shows were carried out for students and teachers followed by discussion and question–answers sessions. They were encouraged by a token prize for presentation/answers of questions, and activities like drawing, poem writing, and article on vultures. The institutes covered are as follows:

Meeting Date	Place	Name of College/School	No of attendee
05-12-2022	VCBC	Baihata College	25
06-12-2022	Kamrup	KulsiJanajatiya HS	100
12-12-2022	Kamrup	Sankar Madhav High School	50
12-12-2022	Kamrup	Rahima Bibi HS	150
19-12-2022	Kamrup	Uparhali HS	200
24-12-2022	Kamrup	R K Choudhury H S	80
02-02-2023	Amingaon	IIT Guwahati	50
07-02-2023	Khetri	Dr.Bhabendra Nath Saikia Sr Secondary School	40
14-02-2023	Rangia	Manabendra Sarma Girls High School	100
16-02-2023	Mirza	Dakshin Kamrup College	65
24-02-2023	Dudhnoi	Dudhnoi College	55
27-02-2023	Mangaldai	Mangaldai College	140
03-03-2023	Boko	Jawaharal Nehru College	40
11-03-2023	BaihataChariali	PUB Kamrup(BaihataChariali)	26
30-03-2023	Baridua	University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya	67



Awareness program at DBNS College, Khetri, Kamrup, Assam

Community meetings:

Seven community meetings were attended and talks delivered on vulture conservation. These groups are working on conservation issue and / are local bodies which would be supportive in vulture conservation.

Sr No	Meeting Date	Place	Program	No of People
1	22-11-2022	Loharghat	Diya Foundation	200
2	12-12-2022	Kohra,Kaziranga	Kaziranga Wildlife Society	60
3	24-01-2023	Chandmari, Guwahati	Assam State Pensioners Bhawan	50
4	06-02-2023	Demow	Gram Pramukh	30
5	11-03-2023	BaihataChariali	PUB Kamrup(BaihataChariali)	26
6	16-03-2023	Sibsagar	Self Help Group	25
7	21-03-2023	Boko	Block Development Officer	53

Forest staff Training:

Nine training programs were carried out for frontline forest staff and trainees. They were provided opportunity to handle a surrogate species and the rescued Himalayan vultures were released in such programs. Also, the staff were introduced to vulture identification and other activities of conservation through presentation and hands-on session.

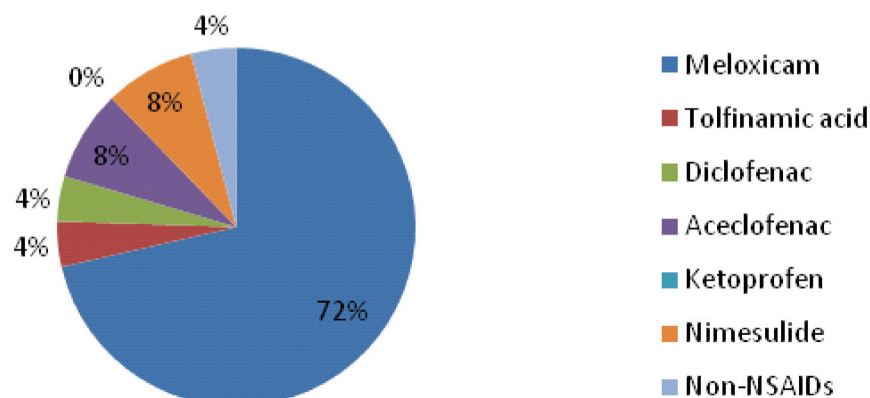
Sr No	Meeting Date	Place	Range/Region	No of People
1	09-04-2022	VCBC	Karnataka Forest School	40
2	13-05-2022	VCBC	Sangli Forest School	45
3	19-11-2022	VCBC	Himachal Forest School	45
4	26-11-2022	VCBC	Loharghat Range	20
5	24-02-2023	VCBC	Kulsi Range	28
6	26-02-2023	VCBC	Forest School Assam	25
7	28-02-2023	Amchang WLS	NarengiTinali	15
8	21-03-2023	VCBC	Assam Forest School	36
9	27-03-2023	Dibrugarh	Dibrugarh Range	100

Pharmacy Surveys

To assess the prevalence of various veterinary NSAIDs available for the treatment of cattle, with emphasis on the known vulture-toxic NSAIDs, undercover pharmacy surveys were carried out at 49 pharmacies in 14 districts in pVSZ Assam. Meloxicam was found as the dominant drug (72%). We carried out surveys in the Vulture Release Zone as well as in the westernmost districts of Assam those fall under the VRR zone of West Bengal. In west and central Assam there is a need to undertake more efforts as availability of nimesulide was observed quite high -about 20%. The safe drugs comprised 76%, while the unsafe drugs comprised 20% (diclofenac (4%), Aceclofenac (8%) and nimesulide (8%)) in the veterinary pharmacies. Ketoprofen was not found in the market.

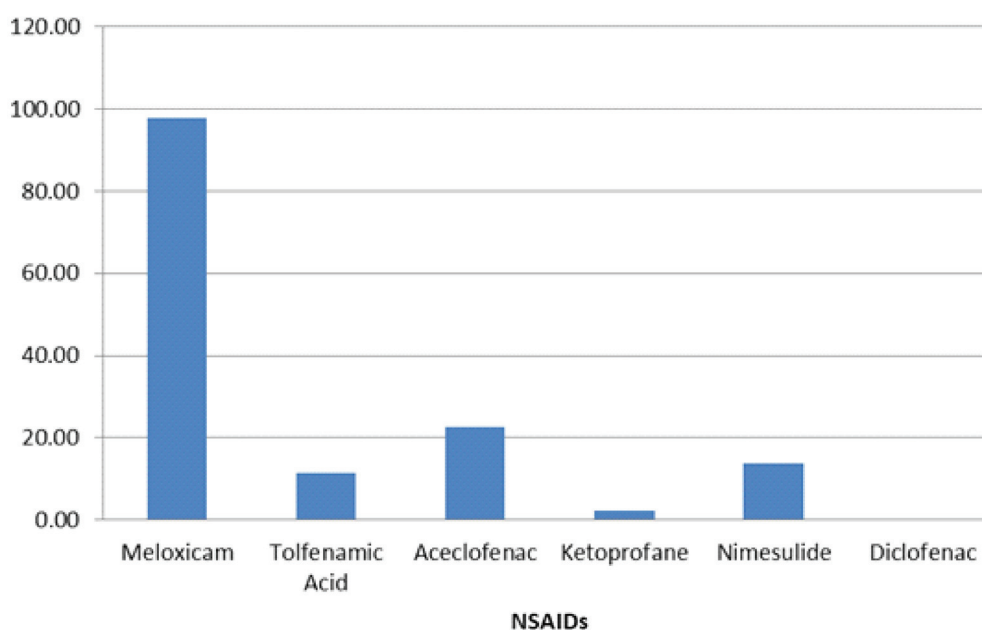
As we have initiated pharmacy surveys in the western and central Assam for the release zone program, it was found that nimesulide and aceclofenac are sold commonly there. Considering these districts as well, the safe drug was found in 60% of the pharmacies.

The availability of Veterinary NSAIDs in VSZ Assam during 2022-23



The open survey was conducted to find out the availability of NSAIDs in the market. The pharmacist was asked about all medicines available in the pharmacy that showed that almost all shops had meloxicam available. The opportunity was taken to spread awareness among pharmacists about the harmful drugs and vulture conservation.

Availability of NSAIDs in VSZ Assam 2022-23



Vulture Colony monitoring

During 2022-23, 40 nests were monitored at the vulture colony at Demow, Sivasagar. The trees are numbered and nest are monitored for the nesting progress. This far, slender-billed vulture (n=11) and white-rumped vulture (n=17) have fledged, while rest of the nesting are still in growing phase. The breeding season extends till May-June.

Road Counts for vultures:

During the meetings and pharmacy surveys, opportunistic road counts were undertaken. Preliminary data from 800 kms of road transects showed five White-rumped vultures and 36 Himalayan vultures along the highways. Cattle carcasses were sighted thrice though no vultures were sighted scavenging on the carcasses.

Vulture mortality and rescue

There were vulture mortalities on 16 occasions in Assam caused by electrocution (3) and poisoning (13). In all 59 vultures died in these mishaps (47 Himalayan vulture, 9 white-backed and 3 slender-billed vulture) while 23 were rescued and released.

Problems encountered

A few meetings only carried out in the first half of the year as the restrictions (those initiated during COVID 19) on gatherings still persisted

Lack of staff (biologists) as we got the sufficient number of biologists from December-January only