

Satellite Telemetry of Eagles & Harriers in Gujarat State

Gujarat has magnificent avifaunal diversity, reflected in its rich and varied birdlife of 609 species. The presence of 19 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) also signifies Gujarat's importance as a safe abode to migratory species. The Saurashtra and Kachchh regions are some of the unique habitats of important bird species, especially for prey birds. The birds of prey (raptors) play an important role in the varied ecosystems. The second-largest population of winter migratory Harriers is reported from the *Bhal* region of Bhavnagar. However, various research studies show that the raptors' population is facing a decline throughout their distribution range. Therefore, a technology-driven scientific project on eagles and harries' ecology has been initiated in the Saurashtra and Kutchh landscape with prior permission from the competent authority.

Under this project, the Gujarat Forest Department has undertaken a scientific step for deploying solar-powered satellite transmitters on birds of prey. The tagging exercise was carried out in the Saurashtra and Kachchh landscape. Initially, a thorough and in-depth survey was carried out by the tagging team. Then the selected birds of prey were captured with the help of experienced and skilled trappers. Proper methodology and safety measures were followed during the tagging work. So far, three eagles (one of each species) *viz.* Greater Spotted Eagle (GSE), Indian Spotted Eagle (ISE), Tawny Eagle (TE), and one Pallid Harrier have been tagged with solar-powered satellite transmitters.

This scientific study will generate important data that may serve as a baseline for conserving eagles and harriers in the Saurashtra and Kachchh landscape. The data generated will provide in-depth insight into the migration pattern, dispersal and foraging ecology, wintering and breeding grounds, habitat preferences, and other various unknown facts about the eagles and harriers. Aforementioned, scientific information may play a significant role to plan the future conservation work of these species.

The entire exercise was carried out under the direction and guidance of Shri Shyamal Tikadar, IFS, PCCF (Wildlife) & CWLW, Gujarat State, Shri D.T. Vasavada, IFS, CCF Wildlife Circle, Junagadh, and supervision of Dr. Mohan Ram, IFS, DCF, Wildlife Division, Sasan-Gir, Gujarat. Mr. Devesh Gadhvi from The Corbett Foundation, an ornithologist having experience in tagging work, was also involved as an expert. From the Wildlife Division, Sasan-Gir, the Range Forest Officers, experienced wildlife veterinarians and local field staff had also worked and participated in the tagging work.

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