Interaction of Indian White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* with wild dog *Cuon alpinus* in Kanha National Park

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Indian White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* is a carrion-feeder and useful scavenger in the countryside and in the environs of towns and villages (Ali 1979). Once common across India, the Indian White-backed Vulture has become 'Critically' endangered (Islam & Rahmani 2002) in recent years. However it is still plentiful and commonly seen in the Kanha National Park (Madhya Pradesh, India).

On 15.iii.1996, I watched a pack of wild dogs *Cuon alpinus* hunt spotted deer *Axis axis* in the meadows (22º17'N 80º37'E) of Kanha National Park. A pack of six wild dogs chased a spotted deer until it was exhausted. Then they tore its hip muscle, making it lame. They clung to the live prey and began tearing pieces of its flesh.

Several soaring vultures, circling over an area, are an indication of a kill (carcase). They are guided to the carcase by crows, dogs and jackals (Ali & Ripley 1989). Within no time, 60 Indian White-backed Vultures descended to the carcase, edging out the canids by sheer numbers, took possession of it and devoured the carcase within a few minutes. The wild dogs watched helplessly from a distance.

A pack of hungry wild dogs, if sufficiently numerous, will not hesitate to attack a panther *Panthera pardus*, a sloth bear *Melursus ursinus* or even a tiger *Panthera tigris*. Indeed, they are known not only to appropriate the kill of a tiger, but also to kill it during a chance encounter (Prater 1980). That such formidable predators were driven away from their kill, which was usurped and consumed by Indian White-backed Vultures, is an indication that vultures will compete with wild dogs for food.

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Himalayan (White-tailed) Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis* at Londa, Karnataka, a deletion

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Whilst researching bird records from western Maharashtra, I came across the paper by Koelz (1942) from Londa, Karnataka and his specimen of a female Himalayan Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis* shot at Londa on 15.ii.1938. I entered it into my database of birds of the region, noting that the specimen was also cited by Ali and Ripley (1983), Grimmett et al. (1998) and Kazmierczak (2000) but as the bird was outside the region I was studying, thought no more about it until I came across *BirdSpot 3.5* (Shyamal 2003), which listed Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* at Londa and not Himalayan Rubythroat.

I saw that the citation given by Shyamal (2003) was the electronic database of the Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH) Chicago (http://www.museumboerhaave.nl/e_intro.html), but convinced that there was a mistake I checked the web-site and found that the museum did indeed list specimen #239109 as Siberian Rubythroat and not Himalayan Rubythroat from Londa on exactly the same date as that given by Koelz. I checked Koelz (1942) and Ali and Ripley (1982) again to make sure the mistake was not mine and on confirming that it was not, wrote to Dave Willard at the FMNH enquiring whether there was a mistake in the database. He very kindly checked the specimen and wrote back, "It appears there is little question that it is correctly identified as *Erithacus calliope*." He also wrote to other American museums that also housed Koelz specimens and they wrote to inform me that they had no specimens of Himalayan Rubythroat from that region. This was not surprising as it is inconceivable that there could have been two different rubythroat species shot on exactly the same day at the same location especially without Koelz mentioning it in his paper, in which he very clearly wrote, "Only a single specimen was observed, a female collected in an old rice field on February 15th".

It is clear that Koelz mis-identified this specimen and that Himalayan Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis* previously named *Erithacus pectoralis* should be deleted from the Karnataka and indeed peninsular list and re-instated as a record of Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*.

Incidentally there is one other record of *calliope* from this region, "Jerdon mentions having once seen a specimen that had taken refuge on board ship, a little south of Bombay, in the month of November," (Butler 1881).

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