



Vernacular Names of the Indian Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) in and around the Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat, India, and their significance in Conservation

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A total of 23 species of vultures are found worldwide, of which 14 species are classified as Old-World vultures (Family: *Accipitridae*) distributed across Africa, Europe, and Asia, while seven are categorized as New World vultures (Family: *Cathartidae*), found in the North and South America. The Indian vulture (*Gyps indicus*) is one of the nine vulture species observed in India. *G. indicus* breeds predominantly in India, south of the Gangetic plains, extending north to Delhi, east through Madhya Pradesh, and south to the Nilgiris (IUCN 2024, Prakash et al., 2019). Given its wide distribution, this species is recognised by various vernacular names across its range in India. Notably, scientific names are rarely used in everyday language by local communities, who instead use vernacular names rooted in features that describe the organism's appearance, biological characteristics, distribution and natural history (Sarasa et al., 2012).

In Gujarat, *G. indicus* occurs throughout the state, with its presence well-documented in the Saurashtra landscape, including the Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary, which is regarded as a key habitat for the species (Patel & Bagada, 2022, IUCN 2024). Following the significant decline in vulture populations caused by the use of diclofenac in the veterinary treatment, the population of *G.*

indicus has shown signs of recovery in Gujarat and other parts of the Indian subcontinent (Prakash et al., 2019).

During interviews conducted in 2024 with local communities from 35 different villages surrounding Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary (Fig. 1) regarding their perceptions about vulture conservation, it was observed that multiple vernacular names are used by locals for the Indian vulture. In this article, we compiled the vernacular names used for Indian Vulture by the local communities and other stakeholders in this region (see Table 1). Data collection was conducted opportunistically across 35 villages situated within a five-kilometre radius of Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Out of the six vernacular names, Girnari Gidh/ Gidh is used in all the sampled villages (35), followed by Garjada (32), Garj (5), Garuda (1), and Gidhraj (1) (Fig 2). Out of the 350 individuals surveyed, 72 respondents (20.6%) were unable to identify or recall the vernacular names of vultures. The data indicates that a combination of names is being utilized in the villages. The vernacular names of the Indian vulture and their usage in 35 fringe villages of the Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary are illustrated in Fig. 2.

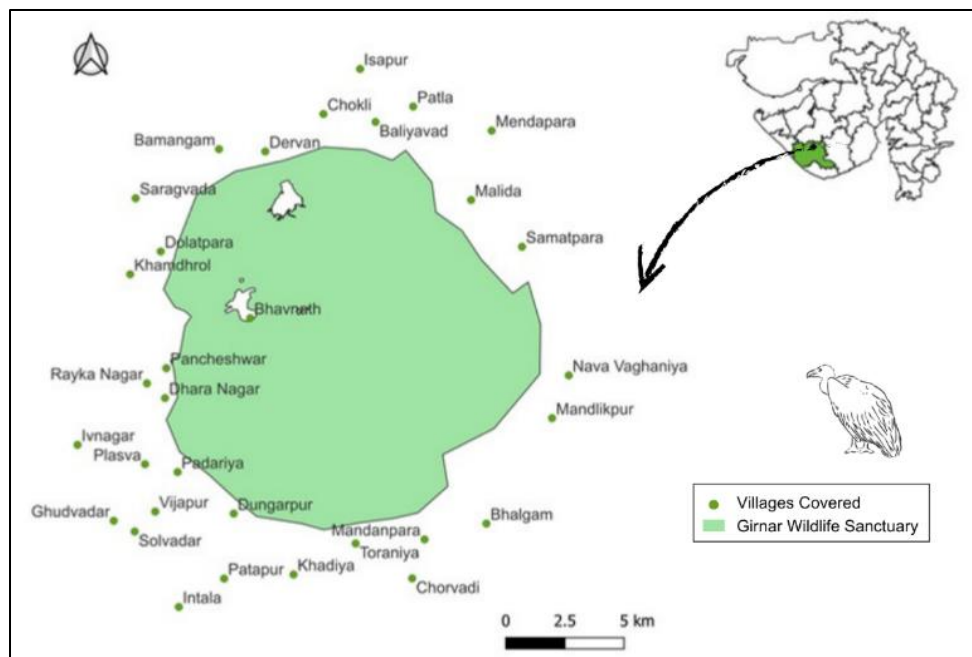


Figure 1: Map showing the 35 villages covered for the community survey in Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary

Table 1: Vernacular names (VN) of *Gyps indicus* used in the fringe villages of Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary

S. N.	Vernacular Name	Description
1.	Girnari Gidh	‘Girnari’ arrived from Girnar - the hill located in Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Junagadh, a prime habitat of Indian vulture, and Gidh meaning vulture.
2.	Gidh	“Gidh” is the common term for vulture in both Gujarati and Hindi.
3.	Garjada	“Garjada” is the Gujarati word for “roaring”.
4.	Garuda	Mentioned vulture as “Garuda” in Hindu mythology
5.	Garj	Local dialect of “Garjada”.
6.	Gidhraj	The meanings of Gidh and Raj are vulture and king, respectively.

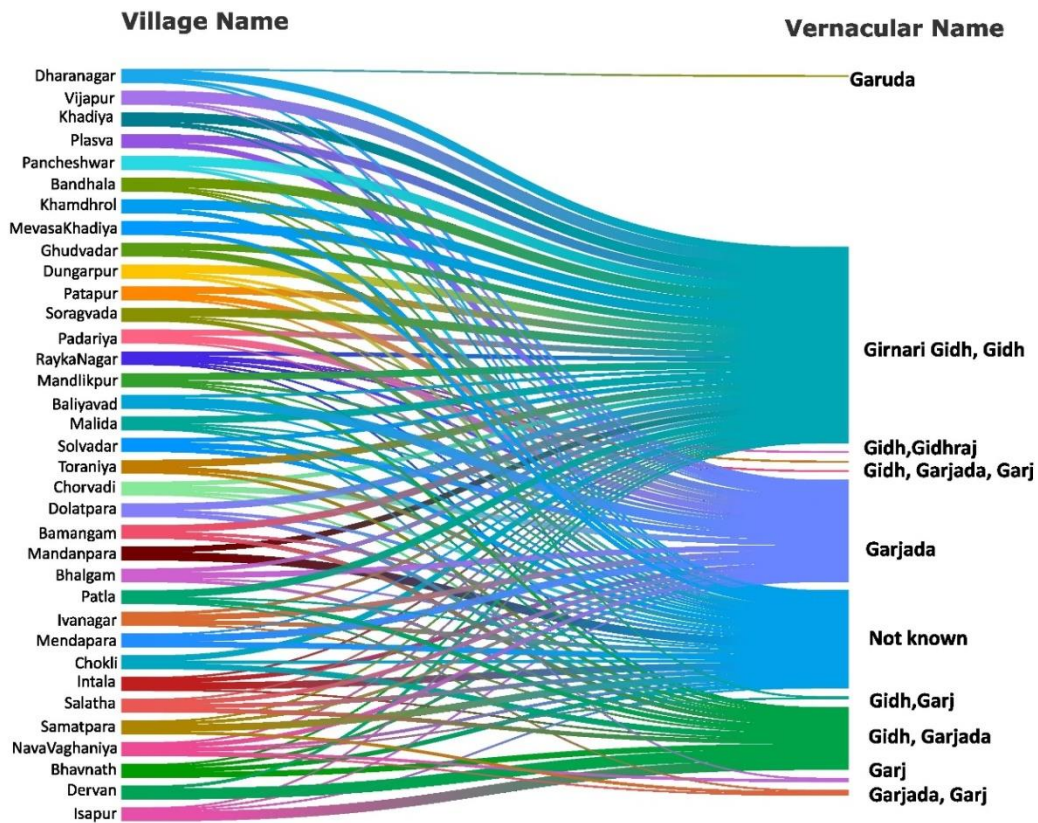


Figure 2: Vernacular name usage across villages.

Vernacular names assigned by the local or Indigenous communities provide significant insights into their understanding of species and are vital for ethno-zoological and botanical studies (Singh, 2008). While Linnaean scientific nomenclature serves as a universal system for species identification, it is often unfamiliar to local communities and various stakeholders (Nisha & Nishith, 2023). The vernacular names listed in Table 1 reflects the awareness and knowledge among the local communities and other stakeholders regarding the Indian vulture (*G. indicus*) in the Girnar wildlife Sanctuary. This information holds immense value for the future research and conservation programmes on vultures in the Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent landscapes (Nisha & Nishith, 2023.)

Although the scientific community primarily relies on binomial nomenclature, local /vernacular names play a crucial role in connecting researchers, policymakers, conservation professionals, and amateurs with local communities and the public. These names act as essential bridge between specialists and non-specialists, enhancing the accessibility and understanding of species related information (Sarasa et al., 2012).

(Nisha & Nishith, 2023) have previously emphasized the significance of vernacular names in the conservation of Indian Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista philippensis*). Similarly, local knowledge, including vernacular names, is a vital resource for vulture conservation (Singh, 2008). The incorporation of vernacular names into conservation strategies can foster local community involvement and support, which is critical for the success of biodiversity conservation initiatives.

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